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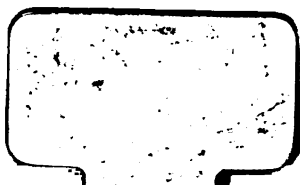
GORIES:FOR:T

CHRISTIA

YEAR



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**STORIES**  
**FOR**  
**THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.**

**BY**  
**C. A. JONES**  
**AUTHOR OF "CHURCH STORIES" ETC.**



**VOL. VI.**

**Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity to the Twenty-fifth  
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## CONTENTS.

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<b>Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity :</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
THE YOUNG SOLDIER'S BATTLE . . .	I
<b>Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity :</b>	
NOBODY'S BOY . . . . .	25
<b>Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity :</b>	
THE LITTLE COTTAGE ON THE ROCK .	49
<b>Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity :</b>	
GLEAMS FROM THE CROSS . . . .	73
<b>Twentieth Sunday after Trinity :</b>	
THE GREY CLOAK OF THE MOUNTAINS .	97
<b>Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity :</b>	
A STORY OF LONG AGO . . . . .	121
<b>Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity :</b>	
A DARK NOVEMBER DAY . . . . .	145
<b>Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity :</b>	
OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH . . . .	169

	PAGE
<b>Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity :</b>	
PARDON THROUGH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD .	193
<b>Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity :</b>	
HARD WAYS MADE SOFT . . . .	217

# THE YOUNG SOLDIER'S BATTLE.

---

## Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

---

“Onward, Christian soldiers,  
Marching as to war,  
With the Cross of JESUS  
Going on before.”

“MY boys,” said the Vicar of Rendleton, as he gave the lads of the choir their usual Sunday lesson, on the morning of the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity; “my boys, if I were asked to say what the teaching of this day is, I should answer in a very few words, Patient suffering and hope.

“In the Collect we ask that God’s continual pity may cleanse and defend His Church; we make a confession when we use this expression *pity*,—what does it mean?”

"To be sorry, sir," answered the boys.

"Yes, you are quite right,—to pity a person is to be sorry for him ; and so we ask our Heavenly FATHER to be sorry for us, for our many sins, for our many shortcomings ; and by His infinite mercy,—by the very sorrows that He sends us to cleanse and defend us, the members of His Church,—we acknowledge that we cannot continue in safety without His succour, and pray Him to preserve and keep us evermore by His help and goodness.

"And then the Epistle is taken from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle S. Paul to the Ephesians, written to them from Rome whilst he was in bonds for CHRIST's sake, and he begs them not to faint, that is, to be dismayed at his tribulations for them ; for that these tribulations were their glory.

"It was for them, for their sakes, for the whole Gentile Church, that he was in prison ; it was because he preached JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified that the Roman Emperor had ordered him to be placed in bonds ; and all suffering for JESUS' sake is the glory of Christians ; and this is why S. Paul bids the Church at Ephesus not to faint at his tribulations, and he prays for them that they may be able to

comprehend with all Saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of that love of CHRIST which passeth knowledge, that love which can bear all things for JESUS' sake.

"And the Gospel tells us the story of the raising of the son of the widow of Nain from the dead. There is a mystical meaning in the miracle which we must just glance at.

"The widow is the Church weeping over her lost son ; the son himself is the Christian ; the bearers are the sins which are fast carrying him to his grave.

"And then comes the Most Merciful, and hears the Church's voice weeping over one of her children ; and in His infinite compassion JESUS bids the sins that are carrying the widow's son to his grave no longer have dominion over him, and He touches the bier, and the power of Resurrection life, the grace of repentance comes into the heart that was dead in trespasses and sins, and the child that was dead returns to the arms of his loving Mother, the Church.

"This is the beautiful spiritual sense of the miracle ; in its literal sense it tells us of hope in sorrow. We too mourn and weep at earthly trouble as that poor widow of Nain did ; the Cross of suffering is laid upon us as it was upon

her ; but through the suffering, the gentle loving voice of our Blessed Master speaks to us as it did to her,—tells us not to weep, but bids us think of the path of thorns which leads to the crown of glory.

“ My boys, I have said more to you than I intended to do when I began, but I know that trouble must come into your lives at some time or other ; the world looks bright and joyous enough to most of you now, the future looks all unclouded by care ; but I want you so to live, so to brace yourselves up by faith and prayer, and the Blessed Sacrament, that when God sends the sorrow you may be able to meet it bravely ; that you may not shrink from the fight, but go boldly into the battle in a strength not your own, and through the noise and the din and the tumult of Christian warfare you will ever hear the whisper of the Loving Voice, telling you of hope because of all your SAVIOUR bore for your sakes, of a bright, glorious resurrection, when you shall have borne the suffering patiently, and earned your share in the glory of the Crucified and Risen LORD.

“ There are three verses in the hymn for this Sunday in the ‘ Christian Year,’ which I should like you to learn. I will say them to you two

or three times, and I think you will remember them, and they will be a help to you sometimes when the world's cares are pressing upon you, as press upon you they must and will at some time or other,—

“Thy precious things whate'er they be,  
That haunt and vex thee, heart and brain,  
Look to the Cross, and thou shalt see  
How thou may'st turn them all to gain.

“Lovest thou praise? the Cross is shame :  
Or ease? the Cross is bitter grief :  
More pangs than tongue or heart can frame,  
Were suffered there without relief.

\* \* \* \* \*

“The wanderer seeks his native bower,  
And we will look and long for Thee,  
And thank Thee for each trying hour,  
Wishing, not struggling to be free.”

They were sharp lads on the whole, those choristers of S. Paul's Church in the village of Rendleton. There was only one amongst the whole eight who was not able to repeat the verses after the Vicar had said them over three or four times, but who stammered and hesitated and coloured by turns, as he stood up to try and say them.

"I cannot, sir, it is of no use," he said, "I never can learn anything."

"Never mind, Walter," and the Vicar's hand was laid upon the boy's curly head; "although you may not be able to *say* the words, you *will be* able to act them,—do you understand what I mean?"

"I think I do, sir," and Walter Monro's face was lifted trustingly to the kind old Priest's; "I think you mean that I must learn to bear suffering patiently because of all that JESUS suffered for me."

"Yes, my boy, if you will think of this you need not learn the verses,—they have taught you their lesson already."

The Church bells were ringing, and the lads dispersed quietly. Most of them had already been to the Early Celebration, most of them had fed upon the Body and Blood of their LORD in His Own most Holy Sacrament; but as they knelt in their places in the choir, and sang the sweet thrilling notes of the Agnus Dei, we must hope that the Vicar's words were in their minds, that, as they pleaded the Merits of the Blessed Sacrifice, as they asked the Lamb of GOD to have mercy upon them, they realised the full meaning of the petition, and prayed that

as He had suffered for them, so they might patiently endure all that He sent into their lives.

When service was over Walter Monro walked to his home alone. Already the young chorister knew what suffering meant; to him perhaps more than to any of the other boys had the lesson of that Sunday come home, carrying with it a gleam of comfort to the boyish heart.

Walter had never known a father's or a mother's love. The reminiscences of his early years were of a workhouse in a distant town; of cuffs, and blows, and coarse food, and never so much as a kind word spoken to him by any one.

And how the poor little fellow had longed for some one to love him; how he had wished that some one would speak to him as the porter at the gate spoke to *his* little boy, or as the old blind beggar, whom he sometimes passed in the streets when he was sent on an errand, spoke to his ugly old dog Tray.

The dreary little life went on without one single gleam of sunshine in it, and at last one day Walter was told that he was to be sent away, and bound as apprentice to a bricklayer far away in the country.

"Are there green fields there?" was all he said.

"Of course there are," was the answer.

"Then I shall be sure to like it; I like to look at the green trees and the flowers better than at anything else in all the world, better even than at Punch and Judy."

One summer's day Walter arrived at the Rendleton Station, and asked his way to Mr. Spriggs' the bricklayer's house.

He was directed to it, and arrived at his new home.

The greeting he received was not an encouraging one. Jack Spriggs was a hard, though scrupulously honest man, and he eyed the new-comer with something of contempt, and said,

"You ain't as big as I thought you'd be; I don't fancy there's much work in you."

"Please, sir, I'll do my best; I'm stronger than I look."

"All right, we'll see; look here, youngster, folks say I'm a rough one to deal with, so we'd best understand each other at once; if you does your dooty, I'll be good to you, if you don't, well, look out, that's all."

And Walter had done his "dooty;" he had been at Rendleton three years when our story

begins, and he had had a great deal to put up with, but he had borne it all bravely ; and deep down in Mr. Spriggs' rough but not unkindly heart, was a feeling of liking, not to say respect, for the orphan boy he had taken from the work-house.

Walter went to the night-school and to the Sunday-school ; he was not at all quick, he could not learn easily, and anything that required an effort of memory was a great trouble to him, but he tried so hard, he was always so gentle and obedient that he was a great favourite with all his teachers, although sometimes the boys laughed at him, and turned his dull plodding ways into ridicule. He loved going to Church, and the happiest day that had ever come into his life was when he was received into the choir, and the Vicar prayed that he might be found worthy of singing GOD'S praises in His House, and that he might one day join in the angels' song in the courts above.

Just now during those bright September days of which we are writing, a great trouble had come to poor Walter.

Mr. Spriggs had come home one evening and complained of feeling faint and ill ; he would not let Walter fetch the doctor, but the boy sat

up with him all night and nursed him tenderly, and when morning dawned the bricklayer looked up at him and said,

"You've been a good lad to me, Walter, always do your dooty, my boy. I've been hard upon you sometimes, but, please God, I'll never be hard to you no more, because you've been so kind to me to-night. You may fetch the doctor now, boy, I feels all going to pieces like, I wants a little of his cement to stick me together again for a bit. I'd like to bide here a little longer, if 'twas only for your sake, and then I'd like to go to the City that's all built up of living stones, that the hymn tells about that was sang in the Church after it was restored."

Walter ran as fast as he could for the doctor; there was a look upon poor Jack Spriggs' face which reminded him of something that he had seen upon the features of a little child who died in the workhouse.

When he had done his errand, and had returned to the bricklayer's bed-side, all pale and breathless, he knew that Dr. Price, who was hurrying after him, would arrive too late to do him any good.

"Walter, my lad, you've done your dooty to the last; tell the Parson there wasn't time to

ask him to come. I'm glad as how I made my last Communion on Sunday; I felt then as if my Polly, my wife as I buried thirty years ago came Christmas, was very near me then, and now I hope that by God's mercy I'm going to her."

And so Mr. Spriggs died; and Walter mourned him truly. He was very lonely and very sad; he had no home on earth, poor fellow, and he shrank from going back to the workhouse, and yet it seemed as if there was no possibility of his being able to stay at Rendleton.

The bricklayer who took on the business, and who was to come into possession of the cottage at the end of October, declared that he would not keep the boy on; he had more apprentices already than he could find work for, and Walter must go; he said he might stay in the cottage until he came to live there, and that was all he could do for him.

The Vicar was sorely perplexed as to what could be arranged for his favourite, for Walter, poor stupid Walter, had somehow won his way into the Priest's heart.

He was thinking of him very much on that evening of the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, and wondering how and where it would be pos-

sible to find an opening for him ; for time was slipping on, and when Walter should be turned out of the cottage what was to become of him ? He was earning a little now by picking up a few odd jobs in the village, but all this must soon come to an end, and the poor boy would be a waif and a stray upon the face of the earth.

"He will bear things bravely, whatever happens," mused the Vicar, "I saw *that* written on his face this morning ; if he has to suffer he will be strong in a strength that comes from the LORD of all strength, and his tribulations will be his glory. I am glad he was confirmed at Whitsuntide, I cannot fear for him now, even if I would."

There was a low timid knock at the study door ; and the next minute the subject of his thoughts stood in the Priest's presence.

"If you please, sir, I beg your pardon for coming so late, but I have a day's work to-morrow out Yarborough way, and I've got to leave at five in the morning, and I don't know when I shall get home, and I want to speak to you very particular."

"I am always glad to see any of you, my boy, and to help you as best I can. You had better sit down, Walter, you look tired."

---

Awkwardly enough the lad sat on the edge of one of the Vicar's oak chairs, and then he fidgeted with his cap, and the very particular thing that he had to say was a long time coming out.

The Vicar waited patiently, he saw that the poor little fellow was more than usually nervous, and he let him take his own time and did not fidget him, and by so doing make him all the longer in the end.

At last Walter began : "If you please, sir, do you know who my father was?"

The question was a startling one ; the Vicar had always understood that the boy had never known anything about his father, and that his mother had died in the workhouse, from whence he came.

"No, my boy, I don't know, do you?"

"Just a very little, sir ; 'twas written in the workhouse book, 'Anne Monro, widow of Walter Monro, soldier, killed in battle.'"

And then the lad looked anxiously into the Priest's face to see if he would help him with what he had to say.

But Mr. Thornton (that was the Vicar's name) could not at all arrive at the sense of what Walter was driving at.

"A soldier," he replied, "who died in battle ; it's a glorious thing to die for one's country, Walter."

"Yes, sir," and a flush of unwonted enthusiasm rose to the lad's face, "yes, sir, I know it is, and please I want to be a soldier too ; I've wanted it for a very long time, but when I came here and Mr. Spriggs was so good to me I did not like to say anything about it, and so I put it out of my mind, but it has kept on coming back again, and there's a regiment at Yarborough, sir, and they would take me as a drummer, and indeed, indeed, I should like it better than anything else."

"Then, my boy, you shall go," and Mr. Thornton looked anxiously into the boy's face, and at the slight delicate form, and he said, "I've only one fear for you, Walter, you are not very strong."

"Oh, yes, sir, I can do a deal ; I will try to do my duty."

"I know you will ; and Walter, there will be many temptations in your new life, you will be laughed at, I am afraid, for a great many things that you know it is right to do, things in fact that you could not live without doing, such as saying your prayers and reading your Bible, and

going to Holy Communion, but you will not be afraid, will you, my lad?"

"Afraid? no, sir, I hope not; soldiers are never afraid, are they? I will pray," he added in a lower tone, a grave subdued look coming into his eyes, "I will ask GOD to teach me to be brave. I will ask Him to let me always think of those words you said to us this morning, sir. I will try to bear suffering if it should come for JESUS' sake."

"I know you will, my boy; and now when do you want to leave us?"

"I don't want to leave you, sir, it will be a great trouble to me to go away from the Church and the choir, and you, and every one, and everything I have cared for so much ever since I came here, but I do want to be a soldier, I do want to fight a battle: do you think I shall, sir? the regiment is going to Jersey, a place over the seas; do you think there will be any fighting there? 'tain't far from France I heard in Yarmborough; perhaps we'll have to fight the Frenchmen."

Mr. Thornton smiled. "I hardly think so in the present state of affairs, Walter," he answered, "but there's no telling what may happen before you're grown up to be a man."

Walter stayed and talked to his kind friend for a long time, and when he went away it was with the understanding that he was to make all necessary arrangements for joining the 160th Regiment, when he was in Yarborough the next day.

A few more days, and he stood once more in the study at the vicarage, this time to say good-bye, and to receive the Priestly Benediction before he entered upon the new life.

He was more than usually silent and reserved ; his heart was very heavy, poor fellow ; he had not known how hard the parting would be until it came so near, and now the tears were rolling down his cheeks, and he tried in vain to hide them, for he felt that tears did not become a soldier who was thirsting for battle.

The last words of ghostly counsel had been spoken by the Priest, and still Walter stood as though unwilling to leave his friend.

"You're the only one as I've got to care for me, sir," he said, seeking to find an excuse, poor lad, for his tears.

"No, Walter, my lad, God cares for you more than I do, and the Holy Angels will be ever near you to help you to fight for God and the right, and to be steadfast and true and patient.

And before you go I have something to say to you that I think will give you pleasure ; there is a dear friend of mine in Jersey, who is always asking me to go over there and see him ; I think I shall avail myself of his invitation when the spring time comes, and then I will go and see you, and trust to you to show me some of the beauties of the island."

And Walter smiled brightly at the good news, and went away quite blithe and happy ; "the spring time is not so very far off," he mused, "and oh, won't it be nice to see the kind old face again that I love better than anything in the world."

Seven months had passed away ; the lovely sunny little island whither Walter's Regiment had gone, lay all bathed in the May sunshine ; the sea sparkled beneath the intensely blue sky—surely sky was never so blue anywhere except in the Mediterranean as it is in those little islands in the Channel, where so many go to seek for the health and strength which they cannot find at home.

It is to a distant bay that I want you to come with me on this May day, down into a dell where the blue bells are growing in rich luxuriance,

and just beyond the valley you can see the shelving sands and the glorious ocean, and far away in the distance is the opposite coast of the fair land of France.

On a little hill just above the bay, there are some low red brick buildings, and these are the barracks where a detachment of Walter's regiment is quartered, and the young drummer himself has been sent out there to learn his drill.

See him now as he stands looking upon the sea ; his eyes gazing as far as they can upon the sweet beauty of the scene—he always loved the trees and the flowers, and he has them to perfection here, and revels in their beauty.

The soldier boy is looking pale and thin, and there is a sharp hard cough to be heard at intervals, which would send a thrill to an anxious mother's heart, and cause her to look lovingly at her son. But our poor boy has no mother, no one to care for him, and he never complains, and no one heeds him, or notices him much ; when he is noticed it is generally in ridicule ; he has had a hard life of it during the months that have passed since he left Rendleton ; Mr. Thornton's words have indeed come true ; he has been laughed at for all he held most dear, but he has not given up one single practice that

he knew was right. "I *will* be a true soldier," he sometimes said to himself; "I will be brave, and bear the suffering; I will try and turn all these things that so vex me into gain, as those verses that the Vicar told us on that Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, said we ought to do."

There had been little outward help too in the boy's life; a clergyman from a neighbouring parish came over to the barracks on Sunday mornings and *read* the prayers, and preached a sermon, so full of hard words that no one understood him, and that was all; there was no Celebration of the Blessed Sacrament, no loving words of counsel, no soothing promise of pardon through the precious Blood of JESUS.

"The spring time has passed," mused Walter, on that afternoon as he stood looking at the beauties that GOD had made; "I wonder when Mr. Thornton will come; he said in his last letter it would be in the very early summer. I want to show him the caves, and the lovely ferns that grow there; I will walk there now and see how they are getting on."

He walked round the shore until he came to a little creek where a tumble-down cottage stood, which was inhabited by an old man, old Maître Pierre he was called, as surly an old fellow as

ever lived, with whom however Walter had made friends in some of his walks. It had been a strange friendship, Maître Pierre could not speak a word of English, nor Walter a word of French, but the boy had once saved the old man's dog from drowning, and in return, often received a present of a piece of fish, or some very dry hard cake, through which he could hardly get his teeth.

On the afternoon of which we are writing Maître Pierre was not as usual sunning himself at his cottage door, and Walter thought he heard a scream in the distance. Another minute and he saw three or four of his comrades emerge from the old man's dwelling, laughing and talking loudly. They saw him and tried to get out of his way, but he went up to them and asked where they had been; there was a strange misgiving at his heart lest some mischief should have befallen his old friend.

"What's that to you?" was the rough answer; "say your prayers, and mind your own business."

And then as he tried to pass them they whispered to each other, and one of them felled him to the ground, and then they took him in their arms; he was a light weight enough, poor lad, and they carried him to the sea and put him

---

into a little fishing smack that was at anchor there, and they covered him up with some sails, and left him to his fate.

When he awoke from that long swoon he did not know where he was, he heard strange voices around him ; he saw the moon and the clear stars shining above his head, and he shook off the covering and stood before two fishermen who were casting their nets into the sea. They had not known he was there, and they started at the sight of the trim little figure in his bright scarlet jacket, but they laughed goodnaturedly and made him understand that they should be out all night, but that they would take him back to "Monsieur le Capitaine" in the morning.

They were true to their word. Walter was put under arrest, and told his tale ; he would not speak of the others ; his head ached and his brain seemed all in a whirl, truth to tell he did not remember what had passed ; he had forgotten that cruel blow, which had deprived him of his senses for a time.

He said that he had found himself in the fishing boat, but he had no recollection of how he got there, he was sure he had not walked to the sea.

The story sounded an improbable one ; and

he was ordered to be flogged with the cat-o'-nine-tails—the usual soldier's punishment; the captain's compassion was roused however when he looked at the pale face and heard that short dry cough. "Monro," he said, "I will forgive a boyish freak, but I will not forgive a lie; confess, and you have nothing to fear; persist in your denial, and it will be worse for you."

"I have told the truth," was the fearless answer; "I will not tell a lie to save myself from suffering."

The sun shone brightly, the waves dashed gently against the shore, and they seemed to speak to the boy of a love that was ever watching over him, teaching him to bear all suffering patiently.

One by one the cruel strokes fell upon Walter's back, and suddenly there was a cry—Maitre Pierre stood in the barrack square, gesticulating fiercely—there was a young subaltern in the regiment who understood the island patois, and he very soon made it all clear; how some of the young soldiers had entered his room the day before, and had tied him to his chair for a joke, and how he had seen them from the window knock Walter down and put him into the boat.

After that day the soldier boy was very ill ; he had but one longing—it was to see Mr. Thornton again.

Every one was very kind to him during that bright summer-tide ; they had found out the stuff he was made of, and one little drummer boy said to another, “If it’s his religion as makes him what he is, I’ve a mind to try and be good.”

Mr. Thornton arrived one July day—the last that Walter was to spend on earth.

“Oh, sir, I’m so glad to go, though I’ve never fought a battle yet.”

And the Priest’s voice trembled as he answered, “Perhaps, Walter, the battle you *have* fought is a harder one than you ever dreamed of.”

And Walter murmured, “I tried to bear the suffering ; oh, shall I win the joy?”

And then the last struggle came, cheered and brightened by the most Holy Sacrament ; and the soldier boy laid his burden down and went to the land of peace.

They laid him to his rest in a little sunny churchyard in sight of the sea he had loved so well, and many a tear was shed over the young soldier’s grave by those who once had laughed at him, because he tried to do his duty, and to

24      THE YOUNG SOLDIER'S BATTLE.

fear God. A plain stone cross marks Walter's resting place, and inscribed thereon are these words :

WALTER MONRO,

A Drummer-boy in the 160th Regiment,

Entered into rest July 14, 187—.

He fought "the good fight of faith."

# NOBODY'S BOY.

---

**Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.**

---

“Thou art as much His care, as if beside,  
Nor man nor angel liv'd in heaven or earth !”

A SHORT time ago, I was talking to one of the most learned and most zealous Priests of our English Church, and he made a remark that at the time somewhat startled me. He said,

“I wish you would write a story upon the first clause of the Creed, ‘I believe in GOD,’ for every day I live, I become more and more convinced that the people of England do not believe in GOD.”

Then he proceeded to explain what he meant—not that we were a nation of infidels, not that we would deny the existence of a GOD, but simply that we English Catholics, as we are

proud to call ourselves, went on thinking, talking, acting, as if there were no overruling Providence, ordering and directing all our ways, no loving Fatherly Hand stretched out to help us, to be our Refuge and Defence in the time of trouble.

In our daily life, in the round of duties or of pleasures that come to us, we are accustomed to think and act for ourselves, without a thought that there is One Who loves us better than we know, Who is watching over us, and guiding the circumstances that surround us, according to His own most Holy Will.

And in matters that concern the Church, we tremble when we look into the future, we wonder what will happen ; and what is to become of us ? We speculate upon the possible decisions of bishops and of judges, and we forget that GOD our FATHER in Heaven, to Whom we pray every day, will rule His Church now as He has done since its foundation, that He will send us storms if it be right and best, it is as a test of our faith that they come to us, that He will give us rest and peace and sunshine if it be good for us to have it ; and even amid the storms and the clouds that may sweep over the Ark we love so well, we can see the sunshine still,—the light

of His Presence, which none can take from us ; the merits of His all atoning Sacrifice, by which alone we can hope to enter the Heavenly Jerusalem.

I am afraid all this sounds very dry to my young readers, and I am not going to keep them any longer, but at once tell the story of faith and trust in GOD, which came to a poor little friendless boy, and which seems to me to teach us a lesson, to tell us of the perfect confidence with which we ought to lean upon our FATHER'S Breast, and cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us.

It was a chill October morning—a Sunday morning—the summer beauty seemed all to have passed away, and there was a dull leaden look in the skies, and a keen breeze blowing from the east which told that ere long, winter, with its snows and frosts, would send us to our firesides to seek for warmth and comfort.

And those who have no firesides to go to—what is to become of them? GOD help them, poor things, to bear their troubles ; GOD send into their souls the Light of His peace, and of His love, to help them in their poverty and misery.

There had been a seven o'clock celebration

of the Blessed Sacrament, at a London Church situate in a very poor district, and as the Priest Who had celebrated the Sacred Mysteries was walking home through the wretched lanes and streets which surrounded that House of God, he saw a little boy sitting upon a doorstep, crying most pitifully.

He was as quaint looking a little fellow as it was possible to behold. His hair was jet black, and curly as a negro's, his eyes were blue—a deep violet blue, that really would have been considered beautiful, if it had not been that you failed to discover the one especial beauty of that very funny face for a long time—for his nose was turned up beyond all the turned up noses you ever saw ; and his mouth was very wide, and his chin very sharp and pointed, and there was something more than usually grotesque about his whole appearance.

He had on an old red flannel shirt, that hung loosely about him, having evidently been originally made for some one double or treble his size, and his legs were cased in a pair of nether garments one side of which was blue, the other brown, and his whole attire from head to foot was ragged in the extreme. No shoes were on his poor little feet ; it seemed as though no lov-

ing hand had ever performed one kindly service for the beggar boy—for of course begging was the boy's trade,—you could see at a glance that he pursued no other calling. In fact, no one could have employed such a poor destitute creature, so dirty and uncared for and miserable. As the Priest looked at the strange little figure there came into his mind a verse of that day's Epistle, (the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity,) "One GOD and FATHER of all."

He was very late, and he had to have his breakfast, and open the Sunday school, and take a Mission Service for some of the children who were so dirty and ragged that they were ashamed to sit side by side with their more prosperous neighbours; and yet he could not pass this poor little fellow unnoticed,—he could not let this child of our common FATHER sit sobbing there in his misery without speaking one word of comfort, without trying to pour some balm into the little wounded heart.

"My boy," he said, "what is the matter?"

There was no answer; only the choking sobs ceased, and the curly head was bent low upon the doubled up knees.

"Will you not speak to me? I want to be your friend."

The deep blue eyes, all streaming with tears, were lifted to the kind gentle face, and in a tone that had in it something of mockery, the lad said,

"I ain't got no friend, I never had one: I never had nothing."

"What is your name, my man?"

"That ain't none of your business, as I can see; but if you wishes to know, you may,—it's Corny."

"Corny?"

"Yes, the short for Cornelius. Here, you can read it for yourself;" and out of the depths of the blue pocket came an old torn book—a book of poems—and in the fly leaf was written:

CORNELIUS O'GRADY,

Died March 6th, 18—, aged 40 years.

CORNELIUS O'GRADY,

Born March 7th, 186—.

Baptised Easter Day, 186—.

"Who wrote this, Corny?"

"I don't know, I suppose 'twas my mother; but I never knowed her, nor father neither. Old Pat gave me the book, he as lived in the cellar, when I was quite small, and as told me that I

had a FATHER up in Heaven Who would send for me if I was a good boy ; but He's never sent for me yet, although I've tried ever so hard to be good."

"Where is Pat now?"

"Bless you, he's been dead all these years."

"And whom do you live with?"

"With nobody—I'm nobody's boy, that's what I are;" and in spite of the lad's strange manner there was a pathos in the words, a whole world of loneliness in the expression, "I'm nobody's boy," that went straight to the Priest's heart.

"Corny, you are somebody's boy, you have a FATHER in Heaven, as Pat told you ; He loves you and cares for you, and will take you to live with Him at last in His own Home above the bright blue sky, if you try to please Him."

"'Tain't no good for you to speak to me like that, I can tell you, so you needn't try it on ; no one have ever took care of me since Pat went away, and all I cares for in the world is Jerry, and he loves me ; but I don't belong to him, he belongs to me."

"Who's Jerry?"

For answer there was a long low shrill whistle, and the ugliest terrier imaginable came frisking

up, and covered his young master's dirty face with loving licks.

"There, that's Jerry," said Corny, with an air of immense pride in his possession; "I sent him away round the corner to try and pick up a bit of meat for himself from the butcher's shop. They sells pieces, they do, on Sunday mornings, and Jerry sometimes finds a bit lying about, and don't he eat it sharp? He don't steal,—he knows better than that,—but there's odds and ends dropped, and nobody else would have ever picked them up."

"And what are you going to have for your breakfast, my boy?"

"Nothing, as I knows on; unless may be you'd give me a penny to buy a roll."

"Will you come home with me, and have a basin of hot bread and milk?"

"Yes, if you please, sir;" and the first smile that had appeared on the boy's face came there now at the bare mention of such an unaccustomed luxury.

So the Priest and the beggar went on their way together, and very soon Corny was comfortably seated in the hall at the Clergy House, with Jerry on his knee; "and it was wonderful," the old cook said, "how that basin of bread and

milk disappeared. All in a minute, sir, as you may say ; I couldn't have believed it possible, and it was most scalding hot."

"And now, Corny, will you leave your dog here, and come with me to hear about your FATHER in Heaven of whom Pat used to tell you?" said the good clergyman, in his kindest tone.

There was a dogged look upon Corny's quaint face, as he answered,

"I'll come along of you, because you've been good to me ; but 'tain't no use your telling me about *that*, because I won't believe you. Haven't I been left all these years,—haven't I been nobody's boy all this long time?"

Mr. Arnold saw it was of no use to speak to poor Corny then, except upon very general subjects.

"What were you crying for this morning, my lad?" he said.

"I don't know : I thinks it was because I was so cold. We had been out all night, Jerry and me, lying in one of the waggons on the wharf ; we didn't mind it in summer, but he shivered, and so did I, and when I knew that the summer had gone, and the winter was coming, I cried because I was so sorry for Jerry, and so sorry for myself."

"Corny," and the Priest's voice was strangely earnest as he spoke ; "Corny, there is a land where it is always summer, where the sun is ever shining, and where there is no night ; I am going to tell the other boys and girls about it now, will you listen to my words ?"

"Yes, sir, I should like to go where the sun is always shining ; will you show me the way ?"

"I will try, my boy, God helping me."

Corny sat in the little Mission room, amongst a motley group of youths and maidens, all of them poor and ragged enough, but not one of them quite as grotesque looking as he was. They stared at him a little, and I am sorry to have to write it of my hero, but this is a true story, so I must not gloss over facts, he made two or three faces at them, which set them off laughing ; and nothing daunted, he repeated his grimaces, until Mr. Arnold was obliged to call his little congregation to order, and to look at Corny with a severe reproachful expression upon his kind gentle face.

"One Hope, one Faith, one Baptism, One GOD and FATHER of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

"My children," said the Priest, "some of you

who are sitting here listening to my words are very lonely—all of you are very poor.

“But some of you will go away from this Mission room, and you will go to your homes, to your fathers and mothers, and little brothers and sisters, and you will feel that there is some one in the world who cares for you; there will be some one perhaps to listen to you when you tell of what you have heard here to-day.

“And there are a few of you, who have no home on earth,—some few of you who belong as it were to nobody,—to whom no loving voice of father or mother, or brother or sister ever speaks.

“My dear children, all of you, GOD is speaking to you to-day in those words that I have read to you—One hope, one faith, one baptism, one GOD and FATHER of all. He is watching over all of you with the same loving care,—the care of a father for his children. You will go out into the streets to-day, and you will see grandly dressed ladies and gentlemen rolling past you in their carriages. You think they are very different to you; you perhaps are inclined to envy them their riches and their pleasures.

“My boys and girls, they have a higher place

in this world than you have ; it has been GOD's Will to give it them ; but in one respect, the most important respect of all, you are equal with them : GOD is their FATHER and your FATHER, JESUS died upon the Cross alike for you and for them. And JESUS lived a life of poverty ; He was not great when He was on earth as man ; He lived in a carpenter's shop,—He worked for His daily bread. He felt every pain that you ever feel, He knew every want that you can ever know. He is sorry now when you are in trouble, but He knows that by that very trouble GOD, your loving FATHER, is making you fit for His own bright land above.

“You were made His own children in Holy Baptism ; He gave you His HOLY SPIRIT then to help you to do what was right, to help you to struggle against sin. Dear boys and girls, I must not keep you any longer, I only want to say one more word. Most of you know the Apostles' Creed ; most of you when you come to this room say in a loud voice, ‘I believe in GOD the FATHER Almighty,’—now you know what it is to believe in a person, don't you?—it is to trust them, to have faith in them, to know that they will do what is best for you ; and this is the thought that you must always have in

your mind about GOD, you must believe that He is always doing what is best for you, you must trust Him, and pray to Him, and tell Him all your wishes and all your wants, just as you who have fathers and mothers would go to them and ask them to be kind to you ; so you must ask GOD your FATHER Who knows what is best for you to make you so good and pure and holy here upon earth, that in His own good time, whenever He sees fit, He may take you to the Place where the sun is always shining, and where there shall be no more night, but where all is bright and beautiful—more beautiful than anything which you have ever seen, or which you can ever imagine.”

The little congregation sang a hymn lustily, and then they all dispersed, only Corny sat on waiting for his friend the Priest.

“If you please, sir,” he began, as soon as they got out into the street, “if you please, sir, I’m sorry I made the faces, but they aggravated me, they did, they stared so.”

“I dare say they did, Corny ; you see they saw you were a stranger, they won’t do it next time, my boy.”

“I shan’t care if they does, if what you said in there is true ; it’s like Pat used to say, only

you speaks better grammar than he did, poor old chap."

"What did I say?"

"Why you said as our FATHER in Heaven was always near us, near me and near everybody, and I wants you to learn me to ask Him to take me above the skies before the cold weather comes. Pat said Jerry could not go there, but I'll leave him to you, he's a rare one for the rats and mice, he is, and I heard some of them gentry a-making a noise behind the walls in your house, when I was eating of my breakfast, and he'd be a valuable animal to you, sir; I know you'd be kind to him, wouldn't you?"

"Yes," answered Mr. Arnold, "I will help you as best I can in everything, but, my boy, you must learn to believe that GOD will do with you as He sees fit, and He may will that you should bear the cold, and the hunger, and the loneliness, and learn to be more fit for the sunshine because of all the darkness that will have come into your young life."

"Oh, sir, I wants to go,—I'm nobody's boy, and Jerry would be better off with you to look after him."

"Hush, Corny, surely you are somebody's

boy,—think for a moment to Whom it is that you belong.”

“To GOD,” was the answer ; “to Him as Pat used to speak of ; and over his bed was a picture—a beautiful picture of JESUS dying on the Cross. I should have knowed more about it all, sir, if Pat hadn’t gone away and left me ; but when you put on the white nightgown this morning and spoke them words, it seemed to bring the poor old chap back ; you said just what he used to say, except for the grammar.”

Corny had another meal at the Clergy House that day ; and I don’t suppose Jerry had ever been regaled with so many bones as fell to his portion, as he made friends with every one who came in his way, and chased the rats and mice with an energy that was the admiration of all beholders.

I fancy he was perfectly contented when it was arranged that he should take up his quarters there for the night, whilst his young master was conducted to a neighbouring refuge.

In a few days more, Corny at Mr. Arnold’s recommendation had found a situation as mangle-turner to an old woman, who lived near the Church ; and although he looked just as quaint and comical as ever, he had washed his face,

and brushed his hair, and had managed to appear a somewhat more civilised member of society than when we first saw him sitting on the door-step sobbing his poor little heart out.

I cannot tell you how the autumn days passed away, and how the winter came and found Corny learning all he wanted to learn ; trying to be good and patient, and bear all that his FATHER in Heaven sent him. The privations of many years had affected the lad's health, he suffered more than any one knew, he had once had rheumatic fever, and his spine was very weak, and hard work increased the mischief. He never murmured, never complained, a strange new happiness had come to him.

" It's all right, Cook," he would say to his old friend at the Clergy House, " when my FATHER wants me He will send for me ; for now I know He loves me, and I say every day, I believe in God, and if I didn't believe as He would do the best for me, I should be telling a lie."

And Cook would shake her head when the boy had gone away, and remark that he was too good for this world.

Christmas came, and Corny entered into the real true joy of the glad Feast ; he had made friends lately with another boy ; a cute little

fellow, Tòm Preston by name ; the Vicar had told him to try and bring some other lonely waif and stray to the Mission room and to Church, and one day Corny appeared before him brimming over with excitement. "We've found one, sir, me and Jerry ; such a ragged chap, but he wants to learn about the FATHER, and he's coming to Church to-morrow."

Now Tom Preston was not a good boy by any means, and I am afraid when Corny found him in the streets and talked eloquently of the Vicar's kindness, the little cunning urchin thought that good clothes and food were worth going in for, worth bearing what to him would be the tedium of the Mission room and Church.

Corny took a great fancy to this new friend of his ; the Vicar did not for the boy, but did his best to teach him ; and it was a very remarkable fact, and one which caused our hero considerable pain, that Jerry never would look upon Tom in any other light than an enemy, and barked at him furiously whenever he appeared.

One February day Tom asked Corny to wait for him outside a baker's shop. Corny did so, or rather walked quietly on ; the next minute he heard a quick footstep behind him, then he

felt something thrust into a basket he was carrying home to his old mistress, and there was a cry from many voices, "Stop thief, stop thief."

The boy ran on quickly then, he never could tell what sudden impulse had urged him to do it, and suddenly he felt himself seized by a pair of strong arms, whilst a deep voice said,

"Ha, youngster, I have caught you."

Corny looked up wondering into the policeman's face.

"Please, sir, what is it?"

"What is it! I like that, you young scoundrel, when there's the loaf in your basket."

"Please, sir, I didn't put it there."

"Who did then?"

"Please, sir, I don't know."

Just at that moment another policeman came up with Tom Preston.

"Take them both to the shop, and let Mrs. Smith decide between them."

And Mrs. Smith did decide, and swore that poor innocent Corny was the boy who had stolen her loaf, and Tom was allowed to go off, and "Nobody's Boy" was taken before the magistrate.

There was not a creature to speak for him, and he was sentenced to a month's imprisonment, with hard labour.

He heard his sentence quite calmly, the magistrate said he was afraid he was a hardened young sinner ; he only cried just a little when as he left the police court, there was a scuffling in the crowd and Jerry jumped into his master's arms.

" I mayn't take him with me, I suppose ; he's all I've got in the world."

" Certainly not," was the answer, " there's lots of homes for such beauties as he is."

Corny had caught sight of one of the boys who attended the Mission room, standing amongst the gaping group of men and women.

" If you please, sir, may I speak to him ?" he asked the policeman.

" Yes, I suppose you may, so long as it's nothing private."

" Oh no, it ain't that,—here, John, will you take Jerry to the Clergy House ? they'll be proud to have him ; and will you see Mr. Arnold, and say these words,—don't forget them,—' Please, sir, nobody's boy ain't nobody's boy no longer ; he knows whose boy he is, he knows his FATHER will take care of him ; and he'll say all the time he's in prison every day : I believe in GOD.' "

And John duly delivered his message, and

that was the first intimation Mr. Arnold had of the trouble that had come to poor Corny.

At the end of the month he came out of prison, looking very thin and miserable, and he made his way straight to Mr. Arnold (who by the way had seen him in the jail, and quite believed his story, and also believed he knew who the thief was,) and he said, "If you please, sir, might I go to the hospital for a bit? the pain is so bad, they might cure it there."

The very next morning the Vicar took him to see a doctor, who pronounced him to be suffering from acute spinal disease.

"You must have suffered very much, my man," said the kindly physician.

"Yes, sir, 'twas hard to bear sometimes."

He was received into a Hospital, and at first every one thought that the boy would die, and sometimes he would speak of his longing to go to his FATHER'S Home.

When the summer came, his health improved so wonderfully that Mr. Arnold told him he was cured as much as he could ever be, and that he must leave the Hospital, the rules would not allow of his staying there any longer.

Poor Corny sighed at the intelligence.

"Perhaps I could get back to the mangle, sir,—I don't know where else to go,—for you see I'm nobody's boy,—I don't say it like I used to,—I knows I belong to God, and I believe in Him, and I knows I was not fit to go, and so He's keeping me here to teach me to be better,—but still it's lonesome like to live alone with Jerry."

And then Mr. Arnold asked him if he would like to live in the Clergy House, and help Cook in the kitchen, and run on errands.

"Oh, sir, how good GOD is, how He takes care of me," and poor brave Corny cried because of the joy, although he had never shed a tear through all the sorrow and the pain.

One summer's night as Corny was going to post the letters he saw a poor miserable ragged boy leaning against the wall as though he were very ill; he went up to him, and laid his hand upon his arm, "Poor boy, can I help you?"

"No, no, go away, don't come here to reproach me, because I was the thief, and I let you go to prison," and Tom Preston looked up into Corny's face with a scared agonised look.

"Tom, I knows it all, I ain't going to reproach you. The prison wasn't so bad, Tom, because

I believe in GOD, and because I know my FATHER is always near me, and JESUS died for me; you will know it all too some day, Tom, and then it will be all right."

And Tom suffered himself to be led to the Clergy House, and the last I heard of him was that he was trying to be a good honest boy.

Of Corny I need not say any more. The childlike faith and trust never could be quenched, and now the youth is earning his own living as a printer, and above the little table in his room where he says his prayers there is an illuminated text with only seven words written there, and the words are, "I believe in GOD the FATHER Almighty."

Dear children, will you try to learn the lesson that made "Nobody's Boy" so happy? Will you try to realise all the loving, watchful care of your Heavenly FATHER? Will you remember that He is always watching over you, always caring for you? *you, your own self*, are His especial thought, the object of all the tender love that loves you with such intense yearning affection that He sent His own Beloved SON into the world to die for you.

I know it is hard always to remember this,

always to bear in mind the fact that you belong to GOD, that you are His children : there are troubles and vexations coming very constantly into all our lives ; they are hard to bear, they make us cross and impatient, and irritable ; we grumble and complain and chafe beneath them, and we do not remember Who it is that sends us these troubles, Whose loving Hand it is that corrects us ; to make us more fit for the Home where we shall some day through His infinite mercy live with our FATHER for ever.

When day after day in the Creed we repeat those simple words, "I believe in God," let us remember that to believe is to trust that He Who is Almighty will make all things to work together for our good.

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"How good is the Almighty GOD,  
How merciful and mild,  
Who is to me a FATHER dear,  
And I His favoured child.

"There's no one in the whole wide earth,  
Not my own mother even,  
Who loves me half as well as He,  
My FATHER high in heaven.

“Did He not give His own dear SON  
To die for sinful men?  
To turn them from their wicked ways,  
And bring them back again ;

“Back to the place that they had lost,  
Back to their FATHER's love,  
Their FATHER, the great GOD of all,  
Their home, His Heaven above !

“And I am called by CHRIST's dear Name,  
I took the solemn vow  
That made me His for evermore,  
GOD is my FATHER now !”

# THE LITTLE COTTAGE ON THE ROCK.

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## **Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.**

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“Grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil.”

“**O**UR last Sunday, Bobbie, my darling, in the old home ;—almost our last day together.”

It was a woman who spoke, a tidy, comely looking matron ; and her son, her Bobbie, was as bright a looking lad as you could wish to see, a thorough specimen of a jolly English boy, with his blue eyes and brown hair and rosy face.

It was not often that Bobbie looked sad ; but he turned away now to hide his face from his mother's searching glance, and as he did so, a tear rolled down his cheek,—but nobody saw it, —nobody but old Til, the cat, over whom the

boy bent lovingly, and hid his face in her soft coat.

Perhaps some of you, my young friends, who read this little tale, have had last days in old homes ; if you have, you know well enough what they are, and it would be waste of time to describe them to you ; if you have not—if God has so blessed you as to keep this bitter trial from you, no poor words of mine could ever make you understand what it is like, how hard that iron strikes which enters into the soul of those who look for the last time upon the old haunts, endeared to them by so many mingled memories of joy and of sorrow, of pleasure and of pain.

It was a very humble home in which the mother and son sat on that Sunday morning when my story begins ; scrupulously clean and neat, but unattractive in the extreme to most people.

There was an old deal table and a few chairs, and an eight-day clock standing in the corner, and on the mantelpiece were some figures of shepherds and shepherdesses, and a highly artistic representation of the old woman who swept the cobwebs from the skies,—then there was a print of a shipwreck and another of a battle ;

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and hanging on the dingy wall all by itself as if it was far too sacred to allow anything else to come near it, was Ary Scheffer's most beautiful picture of the Good Shepherd,—the Face so full of pity, the eyes so full of tender love, the whole bearing expressive of such intense compassion, mingled with thanksgiving. For the sheep that was lost was safe now, upon the shoulder of the Good Shepherd—the wanderer had returned to the fold from which he had erred and strayed.

Mrs. Hope and her son loved every scrap of furniture, every picture and ornament that was in their old home ; but they loved that photograph that had been Bobbie's prize at school only a few months before that Sunday morning of which we are writing, better than anything else, and Bobbie was to take it away with him the next day, and the sight of it his mother thought would keep him safe from harm, would make him think of the tender, gentle watchful love with which the Shepherd guards the lambs of His fold.

They had been all in all to each other for many a long year, those two who were so soon to be parted now : ever since the boy's father died, when he was a baby of ten months old, he

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had been the light of her eyes, the joy of her loving heart. She had worked and toiled for him, and never thought of herself, only cared so long as he was happy,—but lately she had been ailing, and when one day early in the autumn a letter had come to her from an old mistress, whom she had served faithfully before she married, asking her to take a situation in her establishment as housekeeper, she pondered over the thing, and wondered whether it might not be for Bobbie's good that this offer had come to her: it might, she thought, enable her to fulfil the darling wish of the lad's heart, which was, that he might be apprenticed to a wood-carver who carried on a large business in the neighbouring town of Coverdale.

The boy had a talent for the art, there was no doubt of that; and he was old enough now to leave school, and learn a trade of some kind,—and it seemed as though God had sent her this chance, and she was bound to make use of it.

She went to Church, and took her trouble there,—for it *was* a trouble, that thought of parting from Bobbie, and she asked God to show her what to do, and when she got home again she told the boy of Mrs. Fothergill's letter, and

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added that she had made up her mind to take the situation.

He did not like the idea of the parting any better than she did; but he was young and hopeful, no thought or care for the future was on the lad's bright sunny spirit, and he talked cheerfully of the time when they should meet again, when he should have become so clever at his trade that he would be able to support her, and get her everything she wanted in her old age.

The days flew by as last days always do,—more quickly seemingly than any other days that ever come into our lives; but Bobbie had never realised what his life would be without his mother, until that September morning when they sat at breakfast, on their return from the Early Celebration, and in a faltering voice Mrs. Hope had spoken those words with which our story opens: "Our last Sunday, Bobbie my darling, in the old home,—almost our last day together."

And the boy when he had shed that tear that only old Til saw looked up brightly and said, "The time will pass away very quickly, mother dear."

Again the poor widow sighed; and then she bustled about, and gave Bobbie a nice rasher of

bacon which she had cooked for him, and she put a small piece on her own plate, just to satisfy him, but her heart sank within her when she thought that ere another Sunday came round, she should be hundreds of miles away from her darling.

"Bobbie," she said, after a long pause, "they say that there's lots and lots of wickedness as goes on in Coverdale, there's always a deal of mischief in them sea-port towns ; but you won't be led away, will you, my lad ? you'll keep firm to all you have been taught, you'll remember the vows you took upon yourself in your Confirmation, and you'll pray to GOD to give you grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with a pure heart and mind to follow Him, won't you ? I thought this morning when I heard the Collect in Church, Bobbie, as how that was the prayer that I should pray for my boy, all the time he was gone from me,—and pray it for yourself, won't you, dear ? you'll never forget that,—never forget that you must ask GOD to help you to fight against temptation,—for in some way or other it must come to you, Bobbie, just as it comes to every one in the journey through life."

"Yes, mother, I'll remember it all right

enough, you'll never have cause to blush for your son,—you may be sure of that."

"No, I don't think I shall, Bobbie; I don't fear that I shall," but perhaps she would have been just a shade happier if the lad's tone had not been quite so confident, perhaps she would have had less fear for him, if he had had more fear for himself; but after all, she argued, he was but a boy—ignorant of the world's temptations, hopeful for the future—hopeful, she prayed, poor loving mother, with the right hope—not with the false security that lulls to rest the voice of conscience, and seeks to drown the loving gentle whispers of the Holy Dove, but trusting in the LORD and in the power of His might.

And then the parting came, when the mother was brave and strong and cheery, and the son tried to be calm, although upon the heart of each there was a load of such bitter grief and sorrow, as only those who have felt what such partings are, can imagine.

"You'll write every week, Bobbie my boy, and you'll look at your beautiful picture, at the pure Face of the Good Shepherd, and you'll keep the prayer in your mind—the prayer of last Sunday, and you'll ask GOD to help you to

fight against the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with a pure heart and mind to follow Him."

"Yes, yes, mother, all right," and the lad saw the poor, almost heart-broken woman into the train that was to take her to her far away home, and then he went back to the old room, where he had spent all the years of his young life, but which was so bare and desolate now,—and he took up the little bundle which contained his somewhat scanty wardrobe, and gave poor old Til a parting embrace, and then he hurried off to catch the carrier's cart, which was going to take him to Coverdale.

Perhaps if he had knelt down and said some little prayer, asking GOD to help him in the life upon which he was entering ; perhaps if he had breathed *one* short fervent supplication for GOD's grace to help him to withstand in the day of temptation, it might have been better for him in the years that were to come, it might have saved him many a pang of self-reproach in all the sorrow that came to be his portion, in the yet untried path of the future.

But the prayer was not said, and Bobbie went away from the old home, with all its peaceful hallowed associations, and the storms of sin and

the waves of iniquity, surged over the poor lad's soul, before there came into it the wholesome medicine of repentance, the discipline that is needed ere the sinner can come back safe to the wounded Side of the Good Shepherd.

A year had passed away ; Robert Hope (he was always called by his full name now, Bobbie had been only for his mother,) got on wonderfully at his trade, and his master said that he never had known a boy who took to it as he did,—he would do great things in time if only he would be industrious, and give up the idle bad company into which he had fallen.

For poor Robert had fallen into bad company ; he had not been able in his own strength to withstand the temptations which assailed him at every turn, in the large, bustling sea-port town.

It was in vain that he was warned how the course upon which he was wilfully entering must end ; in vain that his mother wrote him long loving letters, begging him to keep regularly to Church and to Holy Communion. It is easier to fall than to rise, easier to be overcome than to resist ; and Robert had sunk very low during those last few months,—lower than

we should care to tell of here,—but not lower than all of you must sink, my dear boys and girls, who read this little tale, if you do not seek God's help in the temptations that must come into your lives,—not lower than you must fall, if you do not ask God to keep your hearts and minds pure, so that you may follow the Lamb whithersoever He leadeth.

Robert was never at Church now, his Sundays were spent with the bad companions he had made, and all his mother's gentle warnings were forgotten in the wild, reckless life which the boy led.

There came a day when he received a letter which to do him justice could not but give him some pleasure, and yet he wished, oh how he wished that it had not come just then,—a little later, and he might have been free, able to break from the hard chains of sin which surrounded him, and by degrees to drop the so-called friends, who he knew were leading him fast to ruin.

The letter itself was one written in mingled sorrow and joy,—it was from his mother, telling him that her kind mistress was dead, and that she had left her a legacy of fifty pounds a year.

“It's hard to lose such a friend as she've

been to me," wrote Widow Hope, "and hard to think of the sorrow that her death has brought to many as loved her dearly, but she had suffered very much, and almost her last words was that she was thankful to GOD for taking her, and that she knew He would be with her to the end.

"The clergyman was with her, and gave her the Blessed Sacrament, and I heard him talking to Mr. Charles afterwards, and I'm going to write down as well as I can the words as he said: 'I always thought of that verse spoken by our own dear LORD when I looked upon her gentle face, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see GOD,'—I mean by purity, that perfect love that gave up all, every thought and action to GOD, that allowed Him as it were to look into the depths of her heart, and see nought but His own Image reflected there.' And so, my Bobbie, we must be thankful that He has taken her to Himself.

"I don't like to be too glad when I think of her goodness to me, the goodness that will allow of my spending the remainder of the years as GOD gives me, near my boy; will you look out for a little cottage for your old mother? take whatever pleases you; I think I should like best

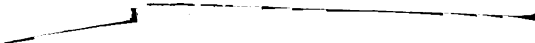
to be near the sea, and as far away from the town as possible ; but not too far from your work."

Poor soul, if she had seen the look that was upon her Bobbie's face when he read that letter, if she could have heard the muttered exclamation, " Bother take it, why couldn't she have waited a bit longer ?" if she had seen and heard all this, I say, I ween that many a tear would have rolled down the wrinkled cheek, many a sigh would have rent the loving heart that was so full of joy, at the thought of seeing her boy again.

There was no help for it, nothing but to obey her wishes : he knew that no words of his would keep her away from him, and so he accepted the inevitable ; determining to get her as far out of the town, and as far away from the town gossip as he could.

He found a cottage at the far end of the bay, on which Coverdale was situated : a queer little place, containing three rooms, perched like an eagle's eyrie on the summit of a ragged rock, overlooking the heaving tumbling waves of the ever restless ocean.

Huge rocks piled over one another rose behind the dwelling, forming a kind of natural



rampart from the north-easterly winds, that at times swept over the bay with resistless force.

A little pathway cut through the solid rock led to the cottage from the sea-girt town beneath.

"It certainly is near the sea," mused Robert, as he stood gazing at the deep blue ocean, "and it's lonely enough too ; I hope the old woman won't think it too lonely, but I really must try and get in earlier of an evening, when she comes home, and if I'm with her she will be all right."

He meant what he said, poor lad, he intended to be a good dutiful affectionate son, but the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, were more powerful even than his love for his mother ; unresisted as they were, they could but carry him headlong into the road that leadeth to destruction.

He tried to put away all discontented thoughts, all the fears that had come upon him that his liberty would be interfered with when "the old woman" came to live with him and look after him ; he got the old furniture from a neighbour who had offered to take care of it, when he and his mother left their old home a year before, and with the chairs and the familiar deal table came

old Til, as part and parcel of the establishment ; then he hung his picture of the Good Shepherd on the wall ; and over the mantelpiece, in a smart gilt frame was a photograph of himself which he had had taken as a surprise for his mother.

She arrived so bright and joyous that it did her fellow passengers good to see the smile that was on her face when on the platform she saw her Bobbie, grown almost into a young man, waiting to receive her.

And he was glad to see her, although his welcome was a very quiet one, and he busied himself looking for her luggage, and finding a cab ; and it was only as they drove along the shore to the cottage on the rock, that she noticed that on her boy's face, which sent something of a thrill of pain to her heart.

Was it that he had lost the fresh boyish innocence which had been there when they parted ? was it that unresisted sin had driven away the Holy Dove from her boy's soul ?

She tried to chase away the boding fear ; she tried to show him how pleased she was with the cottage, and with all he had done for her, above all with the photograph of himself ; but even as she looked at that, an unbidden sigh came, for

there was the expression in the likeness that she had noted on Bobbie's face as they drove to the new home.

He went to Church with her at eleven o'clock on the first Sunday she was in Coverdale ; and then he always made some excuse for not accompanying her to the House of GOD.

She saw the change that had come to him ; saw it, and wept and prayed as only a mother can weep and pray for her only son. He used to stay out very late at night, and sometimes when he came home there was a fierce light in his eye, the cause of which she knew but too well,—her boy, her darling, had been drinking, and gambling.

She spoke to him lovingly and patiently, but he would not brook interference, and she was fearful lest by undue harshness she should drive him away altogether from the home, she had so rejoiced in being able to give him.

She never said one harsh or unkind word to him, she liked to think of that, when the time came that she was quite alone in the little cottage on the rock, when the raging of the roaring wind, and the murmuring of the ever restless sea spoke to her of her boy who was tossing far away upon the wide ocean, seeing all the

wonderful things only those *can* see who go down to the sea in ships.

One spring night the widow waited for her son in vain,—on bended knee, looking out of the little window over the bay, so that she might catch the first glimpse of his lithé figure in the moonlight.

She asked GOD to keep him safe, to bring him back to the loving arms that were waiting to receive him ; but the darkness passed away, and there came the kindly light of another day ; and the first streaks of dawn fell upon the poor woman's bent figure kneeling there, still waiting for her darling,—and still he did not come,—and in the morning she walked into the town, and she heard that there had been a drunken brawl at a public house the night before, some youths had been found there drinking and playing after closing hours,—they had resisted the authority of the police, four or five of them had been taken to the cells at last, two of them had escaped, and had taken refuge on board a vessel bound for Australia, which happened to be short of hands, and the captain had willingly taken the lads.

"She's a beautiful vessel, ma'am, is the Rhinoceros," said an old sailor, looking compas-

sionately at the widow's white face, "she sailed at about five o'clock, she must be pretty nigh the Needles by this time."

Widow Hope turned away, and went back to the little cottage on the rock, to wait until her boy should come home, and to pray for him still, for she knew now better than she had ever known before how sorely her darling needed her loving intercessions.

The story she had heard had been really only part of the truth ; for many and many a month Robert had been sinking deeper and deeper into the mire, getting into debt and difficulties, from which he saw no hope of escape. He had lacked the moral courage to tell his mother the truth ; he had turned from what once had been a comfort to him,—that of confessing his sins to God's own appointed ministry, and receiving pardon through the Precious Blood, and the benefit of ghostly counsel and advice. He had not prayed for strength, and great and grievous had been the fall of the once promising lad.

It was in a fit of wild desperation that he took refuge on board the "Rhinceros" on that night : he did not care for a sailor's life ; it went to his heart (for he had a heart still) to

leave his mother to her loneliness ; he thought of her expecting him, waiting for him, praying for him, and that last thought was the only one that brought him comfort in his despair.

Yes, he learned to value prayers now, when he could not say them in GOD's own House, he longed now for the many means of grace which he had so wantonly neglected,—what would he have given now to be sitting by his mother's side as he used to sit in the days that had long passed away, listening to her gentle voice, as she read to him, and talked to him of holy things.

Then in his grief he remembered that GOD was everywhere, and that He would hear his prayer for pardon spoken from the depths of his heart, out of the wild desolate waste of waters which surrounded him.

Humbly he asked for pardon for the past, for strength for the future. Then he rose up to do his duty in the new life which he so disliked, and he did it well, because he asked GOD's help and blessing upon his efforts,—there was not a smarter young sailor on board the good ship "Rhinoceros" than young Robert Hope, the widow's son.

When he reached Australia he wrote a humble

penitent letter to his mother,—such a letter as it would have done her poor aching heart good to read ; but it never reached her,—it miscarried in some way or other, and all through those long long months the mother never heard of her boy.

Another year, and still she lived her lonely life in the cottage on the rock, praying always for her Bobbie ; asking on stormy nights when no sleep would come to her weary eyelids that God would have mercy on all those who were in peril on the sea.

It was autumn now, two years since our story began ; and on the night of the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity Mrs. Hope sat in her room and thought of that morning when she and Bobbie had talked of that beautiful Collect, and when she knelt down and said her evening prayers, she asked, not so much that he might be kept from the dangers of the mighty deep, but that he might rise from the waves of sin to the life of righteousness and purity, without which no man can see the LORD.

A fearful storm raged that night on that wild unsheltered coast. In the morning there was a tale of dire distress to be told,—the shore was

strewn with the remains of a noble vessel, which had gone to pieces on the rocks during the fury of the gale.

There were sailors' chests mingled with the floating masses of timber and iron, of sail and cordage; there were treasures upon which the breath of home memories still lingered, Bibles, and Prayer Books, and markers and needle-books, the latter worked by loving hands for their dear ones who had gone to sea; and sadder still, there were the corpses of those who had been drowned, as it appeared, so cruelly—but God does not see as man sees—in sight of home.

There was a golden-haired lad—his mother's darling—with a sweet smile upon his bloodless lips, as if dying he had thought of her: there was an old man who would never go upon another voyage, who had toiled and laboured all his life, and now we may humbly hope he was in the haven where he would be.

And as Robert's mother gazed upon the sorrowful sight, and reverently laid her white handkerchief upon the upturned face of the sailor boy, there came to her ear a strange sound of voices.

"Here's her name—the 'Rhinoceros,'—she

must have gone down sudden like ; there ain't a man left to tell the tale."

Then the poor widow went home to pray for her boy's soul,—and for the souls of those who had gone to their Judge that night.

The day wore on,—calm and quiet after the storm ; and towards evening the sorrowing mother sat looking out upon the sea.

She heard a firm tread upon the footpath ; but she heeded it not ; many had been coming and going all day, but she knew that now until the turn of the tide there was no hope that her darling's lifeless body would be washed ashore.

Then the latch was lifted,—and oh, was it a glad dream from which she must soon awaken ? —they had said that not a man was left to tell the tale,—and there stood her Bobbie, just with that look upon his face which comes to those who go as it were a little way with the dead and then come back to earth again.

No, it was no dream ; it was a blessed reality, a mercy for which that torn, loving heart was totally unprepared.

She had not doubted for an instant that he was dead ; she had accepted the words she had heard upon the beach as terrible truth, and she had gone home, as we have said, to pray for

Bobbie's soul, to ask for mercy for the erring lad whom she loved so dearly.

And now there he was, her own boy, her darling; and it was the old voice, only with a strange new manly ring in it that said in humble suppliant tones,

"Mother, forgive me."

"Oh, Bobbie, oh, my darling, God is very good."

"Yes, mother, I never thought to see your dear old face again in this world; I had a hope last night when I was floating about on those terrible waves lashed to a raft, that because for these months past I have tried to be better, and tried to withstand the temptations that have come into my life, perhaps God would let me know you if by His goodness I got safe into Port where no more storms could come to me; but, mother, He has given me more time for repentance, more time to fight, and I'm glad and thankful for it."

And then the poor fellow fairly broke down, and threw his arms round his mother's neck, and sobbed as he had not sobbed since he was a little boy, crying because he thought he had grieved her by some childish act of disobedience.

"My dear, my dear," she murmured, "there

is nothing to forgive ; oh, Bobbie, the old look has come back upon your face, the look I used to love so, the look that went away when I left you to live alone."

Robert looked puzzled.

"I don't quite understand," he said ; " what do you mean, mother?"

"My dear, I can't put it into words, but, Bobbie, somehow it seemed as if your heart and mind wasn't pure, as if you could not have borne that I should have seen all that was passing within you ; but, my darling, we'll not talk of the past now, we'll only thank God for the present, and ask Him in His goodness to keep us safe in the future."

There was a crimson flush upon the lad's cheek as he answered,

"Mother, I mind how I said in the old days that I should never giye you cause to blush for me, and I did, mother, many and many a time, but please God it won't be so again. I'm afraid now, mother dear, afraid of my weakness, and I know that I cannot get on unless I struggle and fight against the waves of sin, just as I fought last night against the waves that were passing over me, and that I thought would be my death."

"Tell me about that, Bobbie, if you can, tell me how it was that you came back to your old mother."

And whilst she sat with her hand in his, he told her how ten out of a hundred had been saved, and he was one of the ten,—from others she heard how they all owed their lives to his courage and firmness.

Widow Hope is justly proud of her son now, and in the little Cottage on the Rock there lives a lad who tries hard to withstand temptation, by His help Who was tempted, so that He might be able to succour us against the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

# GLEAMS FROM THE CROSS.

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## **Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.**

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“ Hold Thou Thy Cross before my closing eyes,  
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies,  
Heaven’s morning breaks, and earth’s vain shadows  
flee,  
In life, in death, O LORD, abide with me.”

**I**T seems to me, as one after another I write these little tales, to try in my poor way, with GOD’s blessing, to help to bring the teaching of the Church home to her little ones ; as though the lesson of each of these Sundays after Trinity is very much the same—the lesson of love. It is the teaching of Trinity Sunday carried on through all the months that follow it ; it is the lesson of the life of JESUS shown us step by step, helping us onward in our Christian course.

To-day, on this Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity, in the Collect, we humbly ask God Whom we cannot please without His gracious assistance, that His HOLY SPIRIT may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.

Then in the Epistle S. Paul exhorts the Church at Ephesus not to walk as other Gentiles have walked, but to learn CHRIST, i.e. to learn His gentleness and holiness and meekness, all that His life of three and thirty years was meant to teach us.

Then comes the Apostolic command, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another : Be ye angry and sin not : let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil. . . . And grieve not the HOLY SPIRIT of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from you, with all malice ; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as GOD for CHRIST's sake hath forgiven you."

Now in these words of the Epistle there are thoughts enough for a great many stories, but I

think I must find one upon the old old subject of love and forgiveness, because, dear children, it seems to me that we never can hear too much of that love to man which springs from our great love to GOD ; and of which JESUS says that the second commandment is like unto the first,—thus putting the great gift of charity on a par with our love to the FATHER,—“The second is like unto it : thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

It is a great many years ago that the events happened of which I am going to tell you to-day. I am a very old woman now, and my hair is very white, and my limbs very feeble, and I know that ere long GOD will send His angel to take me,—may He in His infinite mercy grant it, to the Home for which I long and pine.

When I was a young girl I used to stay with some distant cousins of mine at a place called Bolton Park,—I thought it then, and I think it still, the most beautiful place I had ever seen. I like to remember it when the shadows of the setting sun were falling in their soft beauty over the spacious park, the curving banks of velvet green canopied by the noble trees, the mighty elms and giant oaks standing either alone in

their stern majesty, or in groups of twos and threes; speaking of shelter from the mid-day sun, of covert from the raging storm.

Then there were the flowers that used to be my delight,—the cowslips and primroses, and wood anemones and blue bells, and hare bells, which surely grew nowhere in such profusion as they did at Bolton, filling the air with their fragrance, making a carpet of many colours, beneath those grand spreading trees.

So much for the outer world of Bolton. Inside the house there were flowers too,—three loving sisters who had been somewhat fancifully named Lily, and Rose, and Violet; they were all my friends.

I was an only child, and I had to seek companionship and sympathy out of my own home, for my mother died when I was quite young, and my father, tender and gentle though he was, was a busy, clever barrister, and had but little time to give to me even when he was at home.

Lily and Rose were very dear to me; but it was Violet who was my friend; Violet, to whom I went with my girlish sorrows, and into whose ear I poured the story of my loneliness, and dreariness, in the old dull house in Bloomsbury Square, where I lived with my father.

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And yet Violet's life was not a bright one,—at least the world would not have called it so. When she was a very little girl, she was riding one summer's day upon a spirited pony, but one which was supposed to be perfectly safe, and which Mr. Northcote had bought especially for his girls. The animal shied, the child was thrown violently from the saddle, and all through the years that had passed since, Violet had lain upon the little couch in her own room, unable to walk, a helpless cripple so long as she should live.

I never heard one single word of complaint escape from her lips ; I never knew her murmur because she was not, as we were, able to run about, and dance, and ride and enjoy herself as we did.

"Violet," I said one day, "I wish you would tell me your secret—the secret of perpetual sunshine."

She only smiled her own sweet smile, but she did not answer ; it seemed to me as though she tried to speak, but words would not come ; and then I saw her eyes were fixed upon a cross which always stood upon a table near her, and I wondered whether those gleams of joy which never seemed to fade out of my friend's life, fell

from the Cross which told of agony and suffering.

Mr. and Mrs. Northcote loved Violet with all their hearts ; they were devoted to all their children ; but it was in that little room looking over the park that most of their spare moments were spent, and if there was any care or worry to be spoken of, it was Violet who was told of it, and whose advice was asked, and generally followed.

"She sees things so clearly," her father would say, "I don't know why it is."

And her mother once answered, "Don't you think, George, that those upon whom GOD has laid His mark of suffering, are allowed to look a little further perhaps than we are,—don't you think they seem to live even upon earth, nearer to Him?"

There was a shadow upon that lovely home,—a skeleton in the cupboard even at Bolton Park, with all its beauty, and seeming immunity from the evils that fall to the lot of most people.

The son and heir of those broad lands, young Eustace Northcote, had left his father's house one dark night because his proud imperious will had been thwarted in some way or other, and

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had never been heard of since,—and Trevor, the younger son, the heir now, for his father had cut off from his firstborn son all share in the property, was not all that might have been wished. He was a generous, warm-hearted, impulsive fellow ; the curse of the house of Northcote seemed to rest upon him somewhat more lightly perhaps than it had done upon his brother, but still he caused to those who loved him much trouble and anxiety.

And that curse was the evil uncontrolled temper which seemed to be hereditary, which had come down from father to son for many and many a generation. You could see it in the stern dark faces of the Northcotes of old whose portraits hung upon the walls ; you could if you pleased, listen to countless stories which the villagers told of the misery and grief, and bloodshed which that curse had wrought in the days that had passed away.

George Northcote, the present owner of Bolton Park, was the first of his family who had escaped that hereditary moral taint ; he was the pattern of a Christian gentleman, a loving husband and father, a just and merciful landlord ; and the girls were all that girls should be,—but in spite of all the judicious training that had been given

them, in spite of all their father's and mother's prayers the boys were, as every one said, regular Northcotes, with all the old, fierce temper appearing whenever any one presumed to thwart or oppose them.

They had got into constant trouble at school, and at last Mr. Northcote had secured the services of a private tutor for them, a very model of goodness and cleverness,—but, poor man, he failed to manage his refractory pupils, and things grew worse than ever, and I saw that the shadow that lay upon Bolton Park deepened every time I went there, and even the light-hearted Lily, and the joyous Rose seemed to be graver and more silent than they had been in the old days.

Only Violet was unchanged ; only in her room was the sunshine to be found, which seemed to have left the rest of the house.

Mr. Northcote had never held up his head after the day that Eustace went away ; he had thought it right to cut him off from the property ; but somehow from that time he had seemed to take a dislike to Trevor, to blame him for his brother's fault.

Perhaps the boys never had got on as brothers should ; their dispositions were too alike for that ; but Trevor loved Eustace dearly ;

and if he had had his will not a stick nor stone of the estate should ever have been alienated from the rightful heir.

As it was he felt the change in his father's manner very keenly, and resented it at first very indignantly. He did not know that it was God's way of leading him to Himself; he did not know until long afterwards that the trouble that had come to him, had saved his soul.

He was very much with Violet in those days. I remember that I did not quite like his monopoly of her society; he had been ill at the beginning of one winter when I stayed at the Park, and was not allowed to go out as usual; and so he sought shelter, where every one else did, in his sister's room. And it was there that step by step he learned to be more gentle and submissive than he had ever been before. I could see the difference in him even during those six weeks that I was in the house; I could see the struggles with the fierce indomitable will, the many failures, the few triumphs, but I was older now, and could understand things better than I had done on former occasions: I think Violet's quiet teaching had done something for me; at least I like to think it now, for surely God sends us our friends to help us

along life's weary toilsome way, and the use or abuse we have made of such friendship is one of those things of which we shall have to give account at the last great day.

"Violet," I said, as we sat together one evening, in the gloaming, "what has changed Trevor so wonderfully? I heard your father speak to him so angrily this morning about something or other; I don't think he was to blame, from what I could make out, but he answered quite gently and quietly, only he bit his lip nearly through."

And there came upon Violet's face a look of intense joy; I fancied I heard something of a murmur of thanksgiving; and she answered in her sweet low voice,

"I think the gleams from the Cross are brightening Trevor's onward way."

"Gleams from the Cross," I learned in the years that were to come thus to think of the sufferings that GOD in His mercy sent into my life.

My father had a dangerous illness after that visit to Bolton Park of which I have written. I nursed him for many months, and there was pleasure amidst all the pain and anxiety, in the thought that I was all in all to him, and

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had the right to be with him, that none other had.

When he recovered we went abroad for a year, and although I heard pretty constantly from the girls, especially from Violet, much that I wanted to know was of course kept from me ; letters are after all somewhat unsatisfactory things ; and I knew that Violet was hardly likely to say much about her belongings, although she was always open and unreserved enough, in the things that concerned herself.

Eustace was away still, and they had not heard of him ; I gleaned that much, and Trevor had gone to Oxford, and Lily and Rose were to be married before my return, "And I am to be the home-bird," wrote Violet ; "fancy what a useless one, Beatrice dear, with clipped wings, incapable of doing anything for my dear father and mother ; and the dear father needs care sorely now,—he has sadly altered even since you saw him,—I sometimes think that the only thing that would rouse him from his apathy would be that Eustace should come home,—will you pray for us, dear, that if it is God's will this blessing may be sent us ?"

And I did pray ; and then father and I came back to England ; and when the Christmas snow

was on the ground I went to pay another visit to my dear friends.

I thought something of the shadow had gone from the old house. Lily and Rose were there, with their young husbands, and all the bright joyousness which had belonged to them of yore seemed to have come back again with their new happiness; Mr. Northcote too was better, and his wife's smile had something in it that reminded me of the time when I first saw her, when I was a very little child.

And Trevor? how fared it with him? When I looked at him for the first time after all those long months of separation, I felt that the gleams from the Cross had fallen into one fixed ray of light which always shone in his heart now. I knew that the light might be dimmed for a time, that darkness might again come upon him, only to be chased away by yet brighter, holier sunshine.

On the whole it was a very happy time that I spent at the park: my father ran down to see me once or twice, and his appreciation of my Violet more than satisfied me.

When I left Bolton it was with the understanding that I was to return in the autumn for a long visit.

October with its falling leaves and its mists and fogs, had come and nearly gone, before I was able to fulfil my promise, and when I looked into my friend's sweet face as I sat in her room on the first evening of my arrival, I saw that something had come there since we parted, some mingled feeling of joy and of fear shone in the deep blue eyes.

"Beatrice," she said, and her voice was very calm, "have you heard our news?"

"No ; what is it?"

"Eustace is coming home ; I am so thankful ; my father has been quite a different person since his letter came ; a letter written from the wilds of Australia ; it was delayed in some unaccountable manner on the voyage, and he may be home any day."

"I am glad," I said, "very very glad," and yet a feeling lay deep down in my heart, that had in it something of dread.

"Yes, I knew you would be," and then she turned the conversation, and all the fear had gone away when she spoke of Trevor. "He is abroad now, or rather he has been in Switzerland ; we are expecting him home to-morrow."

"Does he know about Eustace?" I asked.

"Yes, and he is so relieved, for it is all right

again, and Eustace is the heir,—Trevor always said that the burden of this great property would have been too much for him to bear.”

The brothers came home on the same day. I saw that the elder was unchanged, that the sin that had sent him from his home was there still, that the proud violent haughty temper was uncurbed and unchecked.

Poor old Mr. Northcote, hardly knowing what he said or did, could not make enough of his firstborn son ; and Trevor’s life at that time was none of the happiest,—it was only the gleams from the Cross that kept him from being very miserable.

One night,—a Sunday night it was,—I heard loud voices in the library, I never quite understood what it was all about, but I believe Eustace had scoffed at Trevor’s new-fangled notions as he chose to call them, and insinuated that he had only taken up the dodge to gain his own ends with his mother and Violet, and to try and keep him (Eustace) out of his rights. I know that a blow was struck,—that it was Trevor whose hand was lifted against his brother, and I ran to Violet’s room, not knowing what might happen next, or how much she might have heard of those angry tones.

I sat with her for a few minutes, and then I heard Trevor's footstep outside the door.

"Violet," he said, "I struck him a blow that felled him to the ground."

"Oh, Trevor, my darling," and the pale face turned to an ashy hue.

"Do not be afraid for him, he is not hurt; only weep for me that I have fallen away from all my good resolutions; to think that it should have come to this, that I thought I could bear anything, and that I failed on the very first provocation."

"Trevor, the Saints fell and rose again."

He bowed his head upon his hands, and I tried to escape from the room, and leave the brother and sister to themselves, but he jumped up and begged me not to go,—there was no secret in what he had said, or might yet say to Violet.

There was silence for a long time then, and at last Trevor took up a Prayer Book, and read the Epistle for that Sunday—the Nineteenth after Trinity.

"Be ye angry, and sin not, let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil."

Two or three times he read that one verse, and then he bent over his sister's couch.

"Violet darling, I am going back to Oxford in the morning, it is better that it should be so, and now I am going to beg Eustace's pardon, I may not let the sun go down upon my wrath. I may not, dare not grieve the HOLY SPIRIT."

"You will come to me again, Trevor, when you have seen him?"

He bowed his head in token of assent, and went away; and when he came back again, the struggle was over, the victory was won, the gleams from the Cross were lighting up the pale noble face.

"It is all right," he said.

"He has forgiven you?"

I saw what Violet did not see, the flush of pain that rose to Trevor's brow, as he answered, "He shook hands with me when we parted."

There was no need to tell her all he had had to bear,—no need to make her more unhappy than she already was.

I left them alone to their farewells; and the next day Trevor was gone, and I hardly ever saw Eustace except at meals.

The time came for my return home, and there were only Violet's letters during the long months that followed to tell me how things were progressing at the dear old hall.

And now I cannot speak of what I saw, only of what I heard, only of what came to me in a round-about way from Lily, and Rose, and Violet in turn, when I saw them ages after the events that I am going briefly to record, had happened.

Mr. Northcote was entirely under Eustace's influence now, and for some unaccountable reason Trevor's allowance was stopped, and he was obliged to leave the University.

His mother and Violet wrote sad letters to him advising him not to return home, because of his brother's deadly enmity towards him.

He could not choose but to obey. He was a capital draughtsman, and there was something new and exciting in being dependent upon his own exertions for his support, and one summer's day found him at Whiterock,—a lovely little watering-place on the southern coast, which was fast gaining a reputation for itself.

He was sitting upon the beach sketching the lovely scene ; and he heard voices in the distance ; one of them, he thought he recognised ; and his heart beat and his hand trembled, for he knew that Eustace was near him.

He did not look up until his brother and his friends had passed him ; but he felt that he had

not been unnoticed, that an angry scornful glance had been cast upon him. He rose to his feet. And then he paused. And as though from afar there came the whisper of an Angel's voice, "Grieve not the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD."

There was a little Church at the other end of the bay ; the bell was ringing for Evensong, and Trevor went there and knelt as he always knelt in GOD's own House every morning and evening, and asked GOD to help him to bear the heavy burden that had come to him,—and when he lay down to rest on the somewhat hard bed in the little inn that night, there was not a thought in his heart but of love for Eustace.

The next morning he went out as usual to Church ; and as he wended his way homewards he met his brother. He knew that Eustace was in a bad temper, he could tell but too well what that expression on the dark, handsome face, boded.

He made the holy sign, and thought of the LORD of meekness and gentleness, and when Eustace began to taunt him he bore it bravely ; but at last his patience was exhausted ; he turned on his heel, and walked away,—not speaking one hard word,—not daring to trust himself to answer, but still with angry revengeful feelings

in his heart, towards the brother whom he had loved, ay, whom he still loved so well.

All that day he could do nothing ; he tried to draw, but could not manage a single stroke ; he began a letter to Violet, and then tore it up, for it was full of bitter invectives against Eustace, and he knew how pained she would be if he sent her those cruel words to read.

He did not get better as the day wore on, and in the afternoon he strode across the hills to the other side of the bay,—pondering upon how he could be revenged upon Eustace,—how he could make him suffer, as *he* had suffered. He sat absorbed in his own angry thoughts, taking no heed of time, caring for nothing but that terrible vengeance which he felt his brother deserved at his hands.

At last he looked up ; his eye wandered to the west, to where in a flood of golden light the sun was setting in all its proud majestic beauty. The sight recalled his better nature, and as the dazzling rays fell upon the distant Cross which surmounted the steeple of the little Church, there came to his mind—oh, surely they were spoken by his better angel—those words he had read as he sat by Violet's side on that autumn evening when he was struggling against a like

temptation, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil."

Then came a struggle so fierce that his frame shook with strong emotion, and through it all there sounded upon his ear the tinkle of the Church bell.

He lifted his hat from his head, and knelt upon the grass, and as the drops of agony started to his brow he said in a voice so unlike his usual tones that he started at the sound, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," and then the anger died out of his heart, and nothing but the old love remained there.

As he approached the shore, he heard a cry of distress.

"What is it?" he said to a sailor, who stood there.

"Oh, sir, it's the rich young gentleman gone out in the boat alone, though he's been told many and many a time that it was dangerous, and the little craft has struck upon a rock, and is filling with water,—there's not another boat in the bay to send to him, and there's no one as can swim such a distance."

All the time the man had been speaking Trevor had been taking off his clothes.

"Give me a rope," was all he said.

And the man gave him a rope that was near, and said, "Sir, you're going to your death."

"He is my brother," was the answer, and he dashed into the sea, and ten minutes afterwards brought Eustace safe to land.

The next day Trevor lay upon his bed in the inn, dying. The shock had been too great for the delicate frame; and from the first the doctor said there was no hope for him; and Eustace watched beside him in sorrow too deep for words.

Trevor was very calm and peaceful; no fear of death was upon the young hopeful spirit, rather it seemed as though the gleams were brightening now that the cross of suffering was laid so heavily upon him.

He liked to talk of the past, it seemed to comfort him to tell Eustace of all the love for him that had always been in his heart, even though pride and anger had sometimes gained the mastery; he told him of that Sunday evening nine months before when he had read the Epistle for the day, and had gained that victory over himself, which had sent him to ask his brother's forgiveness, and in penitence too deep for words he spoke of his angry feelings the day before, of the thoughts of hatred that had taken

possession of him, and then he told of the glorious beauty of the setting sun, which seemed to speak to him of God's love, and seemed to put into his heart those feelings of love for Eustace which had died away for a time, overwhelmed by the fierce burst of anger and passion in which he had indulged.

Then he laid his burning hand upon his brother's, and said, "And now, Eustace, that you know all, can you, will you forgive me?"

For answer, Eustace knelt by the side of the bed, and there came upon his dark, handsome face a look that Trevor had never seen there before.

"Trevor, I have to ask your forgiveness ; oh, do not die ; live to pray for me ; live to ask GOD to make me what I ought to be."

There was a sweet, glad smile of joy on Trevor's face.

"Eustace, where I am going, perhaps I may pray for you ; but it is all right now ; I am very happy ; happier than I ever thought I could be ; kiss me, dear brother, as you have not kissed me since we were little boys making up a quarrel."

Eustace bent over him, and pressed his lips upon his brow, and tears which he did not seek to hide fell from his eyes.

“Eustace dear, give them my love; tell Violet that the gleams from the Cross are shining very brightly now,—she will understand, and tell her it is all right, better than I ever thought it could be.”

He made his last Communion; he confessed his sins—the terrible sin of the day before, and then peace came to him, with the Priestly absolution, and the Bread of Life. Ere the sun sank to its rest, Trevor had gone to the other shore, behind the distant hills.

I see Eustace often now; he lives a solitary life in a little cottage in Bolton Park; the house itself is turned into an orphanage to which he has given all his great wealth.

Violet's grave is near Trevor's, and her father's and mother's in the little quiet country churchyard, and I know that Eustace looks at the Cross which marks their last resting-place, and prays that the gleams from the Sacred Symbol may fall on his path, and lead him along the road of penitence to his own true Home.

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“All earthly aims shall have their end,  
All earthly hopes expire,  
All faith, save faith in GOD, but tend  
To hell's eternal fire.

“ One aim there is of endless worth,  
One sole sufficient love,  
To do Thy will, my GOD, on earth,  
And reign with Thee above.

“ From joys that failed my soul to fill,  
From hopes that all beguiled,  
To changeless rest in Thy dear Will,  
O JESUS, call Thy child.”

# THE GREY CLOAK OF THE MOUNTAINS.

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## Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

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“ We lose what on ourselves we spend,  
We have as treasures without end  
Whatever, LORD, to Thee we lend,  
Who givest all.”

THE girls of S. Ethelburga's Orphanage were sitting in the woods that surrounded their happy home one bright Sunday afternoon towards the end of October.

The sun was shining pleasantly and cheerfully, although the trees were almost leafless, and there was a chill autumnal feeling in the air, although S. Luke's summer had come in all its loveliness to shorten the long dreary winter by two or three weeks of almost spring-tide brightness.

Sister Helen had not thought it a very wise proceeding that her class should sit out upon the grass, and have their usual afternoon lesson there, as they usually did in summer, but they had pleaded so hard that they might, and added,

"This weather can't last, Sister, every one says, and this may be the last Sunday for months and months that we shall be able to do it; please let us," that she could not find it in her heart to refuse their request, and after strict injunctions to take out as many shawls and cloaks as they could possibly collect, she had sent them away rejoicing in the permission to spend the afternoon in the woods, and promised to join them there very soon.

They were about as happy a looking set of girls as you could set eyes upon, those so-called orphans,—and most of them were orphans, or at least had lost either their father or mother, but they had been too young to realise their loss, and they were brought up at S. Ethelburga's in an atmosphere of such love and kindness, and such healthy industry, that it would have been strange indeed if they had not been the joyous, light-hearted maidens that they were.

They piled up a very large heap of shawls and cloaks for Sister Helen to sit upon, and they picked some autumn flowers out of their own little gardens, and gave them to her when she appeared, and then there was a talk about All Saints' Day which was drawing very near, and about the wreaths they were going to make to put upon little Maude's grave,—little Maude had been the pet and plaything of the house, and she had gone "to the land," as she herself called it, "where the flowers ever grow," one bright summer's day three months before the Sunday of which we are writing, and the children loved to keep her little grave all fresh and bright with the sweetest blossoms they could get.

At last there was silence, and then Sister Helen began the lesson.

"My dear children, I have told you very often what those things are that may hurt you; you will see in the Collect for the day—the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity—that we ask GOD to keep us of His bountiful goodness from all things that may hurt us: by this we mean from those particular temptations which would be most likely to harm our souls. Not very long ago I remember I spoke to you about this, and

I think you understood that all things do not harm all people alike, and that we have each to ask to be forgiven the sins of which our conscience is afraid.

"I will not say any more upon this subject. I want to go on to the next clause of the Collect: 'That we being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done; through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen.'

"Now, dears, what is it to be ready both in body and soul?"

"To do whatever GOD wishes and when He wishes it," answered Ruth Fagan, one of the elder girls.

"Quite right, Ruth; always to be listening for His Voice telling us what He would have done; always to be up and doing when we know what His will is. You will ask, How are we to know this? how are we to find out what He would have us do? We must pray to Him with all our hearts, and ask Him to show us what our duty is. And generally we must choose what seems hard and difficult, what costs us some effort of self-denial.

"Don't be frightened, dear children, because I say this, duty only looks hard in the distance;

the fulfilment of it is very sweet, and hard things are turned into soft, by obedience to the Master's Will.

“Both our bodies and souls must be ready. The meaning of this is that it will not do for us to sit down and talk of GOD's goodness and our love to Him ; it will not even do for us always to be kneeling in the chapel saying our prayers ; all this is right for our souls, but our bodies must be ready too ; we must be active and hard-working, and always willing to spend ourselves for others ; we must not be slothful and idle in the business of our daily lives, but our souls and bodies alike must be working for GOD,—doing what He would have us do,—and beyond this we must do it cheerfully, not minding what it is that He sends us, whether it is pleasant or irksome, but feeling that we are doing it for Him, and so pleasing Him, and winning for ourselves a rest at last that can never be taken from us.

“In the Epistle S. Paul bids the Ephesians ‘redeem the time, because the days are evil.’ And we have to redeem the time, my dear girls ; God has given it us to use for Him,—it is a precious gift from Him ; it is passing away from us ; we have most of us, all of us, wasted a great

deal of it ; and by our industry, by the work we do for GOD in the world, we have as it were to buy back or redeem what by our own fault we have lost.

“ I want you every day this week when you hear the Collect at the Celebration to join heartily in the words, and to ask GOD to show each of you separately the things He would have you do ; and ask Him of His bountiful goodness to keep you from all things that will hurt you, and to make you ready both in body and soul to do His Will.”

Sister Helen looked round her with a doubtful smile ; the girls understood that she was wondering whether they might venture to sit out a little longer whilst she told them one of her pretty stories.

“ Oh, please, Sister, don't say we are to go in, indeed it's sure to be the last Sunday till the spring-time that we shall be out here.”

So there was a great re-arranging of shawls and cloaks, and Chubby and Tiny, the two youngest orphans, were ensconced on Sister Helen's knee, and it was agreed that they might stay on for another ten minutes.

“ My story will not be a long one ; I have taken it from a book I read when I was a little

girl, and it is about a poor simple peasant maiden, who did GOD's will cheerfully in her own humble way, and who certainly redeemed the time."

There was a schoolmaster in that part of France which is called Auvergne, who was named Jacques Guerin, and who had a daughter who was called Madeleine. The father and child lived alone in a little cottage which consisted of two rooms, overlooking the green churchyard with its lowly graves overshadowed by the tall pines that grew so luxuriantly in the Court of Peace.

Madeleine's mother was dead, and the girl kept her father's house, and he in his turn taught her to read and write, and speak French, —for the people of Auvergne did not know the French language, but spoke a kind of Patois or dialect of their own, which it was very difficult for a stranger to understand.

But this was all that Madeleine had learned ; she had only read two books in her life, an abridgment of the Bible, and her Office Book, and she would sit for hours at the cottage-door at her spinning-wheel, looking upon the quiet little churchyard, or upon the clear mountain-

streams, which came leaping down from the rocks, as though it were possessed of a living spirit.

The village near which Jacques Guerin lived was called Mont S. Jean. Madeleine knew of course that there was a great world beyond her quiet home ; that there were busy towns and large cities crowded with human beings, not very far from the mountain solitudes she loved so well, but she never cared to see them ; she was content where GOD had placed her ; and although she was too simple-minded and ignorant to be able to put into words all her love for the beauties of nature, or tell why it was that they spoke to her soul in such soft gentle accents, she felt that she could not live without them ; each ripple of the gurgling stream, each sigh of the summer wind had some message in it for Madeleine, some message which came to her from GOD, telling her of His Love for all the beautiful things that He had made in His time.

She used to sing for hours at a time, and her favourite songs were some wild poetic legend of the Saints which her father had taught her.

One of these legends was the sweet tale of the pure and holy S. Geneviève of Brabant, who after having been banished from her husband's

court, spent ten years in a forest with her child, her only attendant a faithful fawn.

In her sweet, clear young voice Madeleine would sing too of the sorrows of the repentant Magdalene, and labourers coming home from their work of an evening would stand and listen to the young girl, and wonder what could be the burden of her ceaseless song.

There came a great grief into Madeleine's young life,—her father died, and then she was left alone in the wide world, left to her solitude and her toil, with nature and nature's God.

She was not melancholy ; she sorrowed for her loved ones who "had gone before," but her nature was full of hope, and trust and gladness ; she had all the love and all the faith of a little simple child. She loved God with all her heart ; and she loved all the creatures He had made because of her love for Him. To her the words of the poet might indeed have been aptly applied,—

" He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small,  
For the great GOD Who made us  
He made and loves them all."

In the graceful story of her life from which

I have gleaned this short sketch, we read :  
“ Though free from mystic tendencies, Madeleine delighted in mental prayer, which to her was thought. It was besides the only mode in which she could relieve her heart, from the many feelings with which it was crowded. No one in Mont Saint Jean could have understood her. How could they, when she did not understand herself, and would have been unable to express her feelings by language? . . . Though her life might thus in one sense be said to be spent in prayer, Madeleine had set apart a certain portion of time, which she devoted to that holy exercise ; this was towards twilight, when it grew too dark for her to work any longer. Then, in summer-time especially, she would kneel before a small crucifix near an open window, and often allowing her gaze to wander from the Sacred Image to the clear blue heavens, as they fast filled with countless stars, she repeated in a low tone some simple litany or orison. But her lips alone uttered the hallowed words, for in her heart there dwelt a silent prayer of love still far more pure.

“ By degrees there came into the lonely girl’s heart what surely was a heaven-sent thought,— she determined to devote her leisure hours to

ministering to the wants of the poor ; and she would walk over the mountains through the deep snow of winter, and through the scorching summer sun, and never heed either cold or heat, because the work she had set herself to do was for God ; and she would stand by the bedside of the sick and the dying, and out of her own poverty give to those who were in greater need than herself.

After a time she determined to take one or two poor people into her house, in order that she might the more conveniently minister to her needs.

There was one poor old blind woman named Madame Pierre, whom Madeleine frequently visited, but who never seemed to be satisfied, let her do what she would for her. The girl heard also that she received a great deal of assistance from others, and consequently she ought to have been very grateful, instead of grumbling from morning till night as she always did.

At last, however, Madeleine found out that poor old Madame Pierre's blindness made her incapable of properly portioning the good things that were given her ; some days therefore she had too much to eat, others not enough. It

was this that made the girl determine to take the old woman with her.

She proposed the plan to her, and the poor soul accepted the kindness gratefully, and one evening, to everybody's astonishment, Madeleine led the old blind woman to the little cottage near the churchyard. She spared nothing to render her guest comfortable ; she gave her up her own bed, she waited upon her as though she had been her own mother, and at first Madame Pierre was charmed with the novelty of all around her. Then she grew tired of it ; the place was so lonely, she said, away from all her old friends, and she insisted upon returning to her old solitary life. But afterwards she changed her mind : she would not go ; so she stayed on, always grumbling, always dissatisfied,—and yet tended by Madeleine with such sweet loving gentleness, as must have melted a less hard heart than that of the blind woman.

There was another poor old creature, named Catherine, whom the girl used to visit when she sallied forth on her errands of charity. Catherine had worked and toiled all her life, and now old age had come upon her, leaving her lonely and ill, and almost destitute.

“Mother Pierre must be very happy with

you," she said one day to Madeleine, "you are so kind and good."

"Would you like to come and live with me also?" said the girl; "I would try to make you happy."

The old woman looked up wistfully into the sweet grave face, and said,

"I know you do not mean to mock me, Madeleine, you are too good for that; I know you really mean what you say; but think what you are asking me. You never could manage such a thing: you already have Mother Pierre with you, and you have only your own scanty earnings wherewith to support her; the burden would be too great for you, indeed it would, my child."

"Do not say that, Catherine; God has helped me hitherto, and He will help me still. Come and try how you like it; indeed I will do my best for you."

The old woman went on urging innumerable objections, but the girl combated them all, and at last she gained her point, and another old inmate was received into the little cottage.

Think, dear children, of what Madeleine's life must have been,—waiting upon two almost help-

less old women, listening to Madame Pierre's grumbling, and having little outward joy in her young life to make up for all she had to endure. Catherine was much more grateful than her aged companion ; and to Madeleine's surprise, she found that the money which had served for two, sufficed to keep three. The barrel of meal did not waste, neither did the cruse of oil fail, because GOD Who was with the widow of old in time of her necessity and of her hospitality to the holy Prophet of GOD Elijah, was with Madeleine now, in the sacred and blessed work that she was doing, with a willing heart.

A short time after she had opened her doors to Catherine, and when the winter's snow lay thick upon the ground, Madeleine one day found a poor old beggar, sitting upon some stone steps, shivering with cold.

Her heart warmed towards the old man whose name was Michel, and who she knew came from a distant parish. He had no one in all the world to befriend him,—no one to whom he could turn for succour now that the infirmities of age were creeping upon him, and preventing him from earning an honest livelihood. He was getting quite childish too : grief and want had had the effect of paralyzing his intellects,

and the poor senseless face was raised to the dark sky, as if Michel would fain find help and succour there.

"Why do you sit here in the cold, Michel?" said Madeleine, gently.

There was no answer; Michel only muttered some unintelligible words, and sat on, on the cold stone steps.

"Come in, my friend;" and the girl led the old man into the cottage, and he quickly went up to the fire, and sat down; and when Madeleine set some wholesome food before him, he ate it with avidity,—in fact, it seemed as though his hunger was not likely to be satisfied for a long time.

"What brought you so far away from home to-day, Michel?" asked his gentle hostess, smiling at his evident happiness.

"I am come to live with you," was the simple answer.

"With me, Michel?"

"Yes; they say that you are taking all the old people into your cottage, and I am an old man, and I want to come too."

Madeleine did not know what to say; she could not bear the idea of turning the poor old man out into the cold, and yet she felt it was

impossible that four people could live in that tiny dwelling, and she tried hard to make him understand that she could not grant his request.

But Michel was too childish to understand all she said ; he listened to her quite patiently whilst she went on repeating all the objections that could not be overcome, and all he did was to look wistfully up into her face when she ceased speaking, and to say,

“I will not take up much room, Madeleine, believe me I will not.”

Then poor Madeleine turned away to hide the tears that would come into her eyes, at the thought of all the misery and hardness to which poor old Michel must return on that cold day.

Mother Pierre and Catherine joined in the conversation, and declared that it was quite impossible that Michel should remain there ; so she told him that she was going to walk into the village, and that he must accompany her.

He followed her obediently ; for was she not his benefactress ? had she not been kinder and better to him than any one else ? fed and clothed him, when all others had cast him off,

and made him feel himself a burden upon them ?

With a sorrowful heart she drew a silver coin from her pocket when she and Michel reached Mont S. Jean, and then she bade him good-bye, and told him to apply to her whenever he was in need.

To the last he repeated his prayer, "I want nothing but to live with you ; indeed I would not take up much room, Madeleine."

And once more the girl had to turn away to hide her tears ; and then she walked quickly away, to avoid his further importunities.

Something of remorse was in her heart as she wended her way homewards. The thing that Michel wanted seemed impossible, and yet she was haunted by that yearning, pleading, sorrowful look which he gave her when they parted, and she told him that he must go back to his own village.

Two days passed away, during which she thought of the old man very often, but she heard nothing of him ; but early on the morning of the third day, as she opened the window of her little cottage, there was poor old Michel sitting on the stone steps once more.

"Do not scold me, Madeleine," he said,

clinging to her skirts like a frightened child, "I tried to stay away, but I could not; please do not tell me that I must go."

"I cannot, I dare not," cried the girl; "surely God sent thee hither, and He will surely enable me to provide for thee."

"You need not mind about a bed," said the old man, "I have brought my blanket with me; see, it is a very warm one;" and he produced an old tattered coverlet, which looked about as old as he himself did.

"Come in, Michel," said Madeleine, "from henceforth this is thy home."

And so it was; and in time the number of the girl's old people increased to ten. She managed to contrive room for them all; some of them slept in outhouses; they were only too thankful to be anywhere within reach of that sweet gentle presence.

After this she formed the design of raising a Hospital for Mont S. Jean. When she first talked of her plan, she was laughed at, and the idea was scouted as impossible; but she persevered in spite of all obstacles. Practising unheard of self-denial, she never ceased from her endeavour to carry out her object. She was called the Grey Cloak of the Mountains, because

of the mantle she wore, and for three years she travelled about from place to place, gazed upon by all with mingled wonder and admiration. At last GOD granted her her heart's desire : the hospital was completed, and the poor old people settled in it in comfort.

Then a fearful plague broke out, cutting down rich and poor alike, sparing neither rank, nor age, nor sex. And amidst them all Madeleine worked ; others were wanting in the day of trial, and she alone stood firm and courageous ; and GOD's Hand was with His child, as it had ever been. She had a friend now,—one like herself of humble birth, whose name was Marie.

I wish I could tell you something more about Madeleine, but the ten minutes I promised you has already passed, and I must hasten on to the end of the life that was spent for others.

She had come home one night to her cottage, wrapped in her grey cloak, more than usually tired and worn out, and she said that she must rest, so that she might be ready for her work in the morning.

When Marie went to call her she said in a low tone, " Are you awake, Madeleine ? "

There was no reply ; and Marie went towards

the window, and opened the shutters, and a rich stream of sunlight fell upon the bed,—upon the figure in the grey cloak,—upon the hands that had worked and toiled so hard, folded upon the loving heart,—upon the eyelids closed in that sweet slumber, that rest which was no more to be broken by the sight of human woe and suffering.

Marie gazed upon the sight which spoke of such calm repose ; and then she went forward, and stooped to kiss her friend's cheek,—it was as cold as marble.

“ Madeleine,” she cried, “ speak to me—I am Marie.”

But no answer came ; only there was still that smile of unearthly beauty upon the still face. Marie laid her hand upon her friend's heart—that true, gentle, loving heart—and then she knew that the Grey Cloak of the Mountains had taken a longer journey than she had ever taken before,—that she had passed through the waters to the fadeless shore.

Marie knelt there for a long, long time, until the sun was high in the heavens, and a group of poor people, headed by the Priest, all alarmed at her unwonted absence from the Hospital, sought her in her mountain home. And when

the Priest looked in he too saw that she had gone beyond the mountains, where her presence had been as the presence of an angel.

“My friends,” he said, “my friends, our Madeleine has gone away.”

The words were passed on from one to the other, “Our Madeleine is gone away.” They none of them spoke of her as dead; only as one who had done her work of love, and had returned to her own true home.

They buried her by her father’s side in the little churchyard upon which she had so often gazed, and on her grave but one word was inscribed—the name that those about her loved so well—“Madeleine.”

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The girls were unusually silent when Sister Helen’s story was finished. Perhaps they were thinking how they in their small way might do as Madeleine did,—how they might be ready both in body and soul to accomplish those things that God would have done; perhaps the remembrance of some sins of omission rose up before them, some duties neglected, some little act of kindness to others left undone. Be this as it may, they sat on very still and quiet, and

## 118 THE GREY CLOAK OF THE MOUNTAINS.

it was Sister Helen's voice at last that broke the silence.

"My children, we can all try to be like the Grey Cloak of the Mountains; we can every one of us each in our separate way, according to our several opportunities, spend our lives for others. We can learn to forget ourselves, to remember the words of our own dear LORD: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.'

"Dear children, it was this thought that helped Madeleine in her daily life: it is this thought that will help us to bear the burdens of others, and to fulfil the Divine Law."

The girls listened to her attentively, as they always did, and when at last she dismissed them, and bade them run into the house as fast as they could, for the air was getting damp and chilly, there was a grave thoughtful expression upon most of the young faces.

One of the party, by name Alice Tyrrel, a very good-natured maiden, stayed behind the others, and blushing up to the roots of her curly brown hair, said,

"If you please, Sister, old Granny Brown's rheumatics is awful bad."

"Yes, dear, I'm afraid they are, I wish we

could help her ; I wish I knew what we could do for her."

"If you please, Sister, I knows," and Alice's face was redder than ever as she continued, in hesitating tone ; "I was going down the village yesterday, Sister, to get little Polly's shoes, and I passed the poor old soul's cottage. She was hobbling to the well to draw some water to fill the kettle, and put it on the fire for her tea, and oh my, didn't she call out at every step she took ! I helped her a bit, and she was ever so pleased, and she smiled quite pleasant like, and—and I've been thinking, Sister—"

"Thinking what, my child ? don't be afraid to tell me your thoughts."

"Well, Sister, do you think I might go every afternoon, and just do for her a little ? it came into my head when you was telling us about Madeleine and the old women, that I might find an old woman too to be kind to, and I thought of poor old Granny Brown, and then I thought I should ask you about it."

"Yes, dear, I am sure you may do it ; I am sure the Mother will let you."

The words were very simple, but there was a smile on Sister Helen's face, which told how pleased she really was,—how glad and thankful

that her story of the Grey Cloak of the Mountains had done its work.

When Christmas came, Granny Brown said that her rheumatics were much better, and she knew it was all because Alice had taken so much hard work off her hands.

# A STORY OF LONG AGO.

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## Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

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“In quietness and in confidence shall be thy strength.”

“OH, mother, how shall we ever be able to bear it!” and Kate Jocelyn, a fair, gentle looking girl of some sixteen or seventeen years of age, sank down at her mother’s feet and hid her face in her lap, and sobbed, poor thing, as though her loving young heart were breaking.

Her mother bent over her tenderly, and smoothed the golden hair from the pure white brow, “My darling, we can bear it,—we must.”

The voice in which Mrs. Jocelyn spoke was calm and trusting, and Kate raised her head and looked up wonderingly into the sweet, grave

face; for she knew that even then the iron was sinking into her mother's soul.

The facts of the case were these: Mrs. Jocelyn had early been left a widow with two children,—Kate, and a boy three or four years her senior,—they all loved each other dearly, and the little cottage home at Hurstonville was as happy a household as could be found anywhere. The first sorrow came to it when Arthur went to school, but then there were the holidays to look forward to, and all his prizes to be admired, and the pride the mother and sister took in their darling's success took from the pain of parting, and made them only anxiously await the time when he should be with them again, when his bright cheery voice would ring through the house with its gladdening sound.

Arthur's schooldays were over, and at Sandhurst he carried all before him, and got a direct commission, and was at once gazetted to what he triumphantly announced was the most crack Regiment in the Service.

Two years had passed away since that time, and now there were rumours of war coming from the burning coast of Africa, and the gallant Highlanders were ordered to Ashantee to fight for the honour of their country.

The letter announcing the news had come in that morning, of which we have spoken, when poor Kate in her sorrow and grief cried out,

"Oh, mother, how shall we ever be able to bear it!"

"My darling, we can bear it, we must," Mrs. Jocelyn repeated the words; and then she went on; "Katie, in our own strength we can do nothing. I think, dear, the words of the Collect for the week must be our prayer just now, we must ask GOD to grant us grace to serve Him with a quiet mind; that means, that we must be still and patient under whatever trials He sees fit to send us; no fears must distract us, no alarms divert us from His service, 'in quietness and in confidence must be our strength.'

"And, Kate, it is only in this spirit of faith that we can pray that Arthur will be kept safe, it is only if we pray in this spirit, that we can hope that our prayers will be heard. If you will get your work, dearest, I will tell you a story of long ago, a chronicle of very olden times, which will I think teach us both a lesson of patience and of quiet confidence."

We must go a long, long way back in our

English History to the thirteenth century, when King John reigned in this fair land of ours, when the turbulent barons had no peace amongst themselves, but discord and dissension reigned everywhere, when the old jealousy between Normans and Saxons was fiercer than ever, and the weak and foolish monarch, surrounded by his faithless ministers, leaned first to one party in the State, then to the other, and of course pleased neither, and was in constant broils, and almost in fear of his life.

On the borders of the old magnificent forest of Dean there stood in those troubled days a lofty castle, the property of the brave lord of Severnside, who had gone to the wars with the noble Richard Cœur de Lion, and had fought there with the mighty Saladin, and gained high renown for the deeds of valour he had accomplished, the fame of which had resounded through the whole of Europe.

After his brave master had returned to England and recovered the possessions that the perfidious John had wrested from him whilst he was fighting for God and the right, in the far-off land of Palestine, the Baron of Severnside remained in foreign lands, whilst his loving wife and his little daughters lived their quiet life

in the lordly Castle which they all loved so well.

The noble Richard died fighting for his rights in Normandy; and then began the turbulent rule of John. The Baron could hardly bear to bow beneath the yoke of the new king, whose treachery first to his brother and then to his young nephew Arthur, had caused him to be hated by the honourable knights and nobles of the land.

And so the master of Severnside lingered for a while in Palestine, and the Lady Elvira with her attendant guards and maidens did her best to keep up the discipline of the great baronial Castle, and gave herself up to the education of her two fair little daughters, the ladies Rhoda and Mary.

Many and many a difficulty came into Lady Elvira's way in those troubled times, and there were those who wondered how it was that one so frail and gentle should be able to quell the passions of those who dwelt within the walls of her husband's inheritance, and cause peace to reign where only strife might have been expected.

They would not have marvelled had they seen from whence she derived her strength,—how

day by day at the Church's hours of prayer she knelt in the chapel of the Castle, her little ones by her side, and prayed GOD to send His own most HOLY SPIRIT to be with her in the duties and difficulties of her daily life.

The little girls grew to be loving, gentle maidens. The Lady Rhoda perhaps hardly deserved the term gentle as her sister did, for there was a thirst for adventure in the young girl's spirit, a craving for excitement, which sometimes caused her mother some anxiety, which made her fear for the future when she might be cast upon the world with no friendly voice to whisper to her of the quietness and confidence which is or rather which ought to be the strength of every Christian maiden ; but in spite of all this Rhoda was gentle to her mother, obeying her every word and wish, caring only how she might please her.

It was a dark November morning, and the girls sat in one of the turreted chambers of the Castle with Lady Elvira.

"Mother, I should like to be a soldier, I should like to fight," said Lady Rhoda.

"My child, what do you mean?"

"The Epistle for to-day is about putting on armour,—I know it does not mean that kind of

armour,—but the thought came into my head as I heard the word, how I should like to stand beside my father in that blessed land where the Blood of JESUS was shed by His murderers, and redeem it from the hands of the spoiler.”

“Thy wish will not be unheard, my darling ; thou wilt have to suffer and to fight for Him Who shed His Sacred Blood for thee, and for all mankind ; but thou must be content to fight only with spiritual weapons, my Rhoda,—to thee it is given to put on the whole armour of GOD, the faith and discipline which will enable thee in the words of the Collect for last Sunday to obtain GOD’s pardon and peace, and to serve Him with a quiet mind. Thou wilt want strength, darling, but it will be strength in the LORD, to help thee in life’s battle, in whatever lot He may send thee, in whatever trouble may compass thee about. There are those, my Rhoda, who have served GOD best, who have gone upon their way unknown and unnoticed in quietness and in confidence.”

“Like the ever-blessed Virgin,” said the little Lady Mary, who had been standing meekly by listening to her mother’s and sister’s conversation.

“Yes, my child,—she, the Mother of GOD,

she who was blessed among women, lived a lowly humble life, a pattern to all ages to come, and it is for us to follow in her blessed footsteps."

The dreary winter months passed away, and now it was a bright morning in early spring. The sun shone clear and warm ; the earth which but of late had been so cold and barren was covered with green grass and budding flowers ; the trees were putting forth their freshest and tenderest leaves ; and the Lady Elvira and her daughters were revelling in the glad sunshine, walking in the pleasaunce in front of the keep before the chapel bell tolled the hour of Prime. Suddenly a horseman was seen riding at full speed up to the gate of the Castle ; the long cloak which he wore concealed his orders and his cognizance, but the high plumed cap and the glittering spurs which sparkled in the morning light denoted that he must be of knightly rank ; and the Lady Elvira's heart beat high with hope, as something in the set of the rider's head upon the broad shoulders reminded her of the lover of her youth, of the faithful loving husband, with the fame of whose knightly deeds all England was even now ringing.

Another minute the rider had rung a blast

loud and long upon the Castle horn, another and the wife and children were clasped in the strong arms of one of the bravest and noblest warriors of that brave age.

Those were happy days that followed the Baron of Severnside's return to his lordly home. Festival and jubilee crowded upon each other in quick succession, and mirth, and song, and wassail resounded in those halls which for so long had been dead to the sounds of rejoicing, over which the shadow of gloom had hung for so many days and years.

And then the short dream of joy and happiness passed away, only to be succeeded by yet greater misery. The cruelty and injustice of King John had alienated from him the hearts of all his barons, even of those who in the early days of his reign had tried to be faithful and true to him. A fearful quarrel was raging as to the appointment of an Archbishop to the vacant see of Canterbury. The Pope laid the kingdom under an interdict, that is, he would allow no rite of the Church to be celebrated. The Sacraments were taken from the people; there was nothing but darkness and dreariness to be found through the length and breadth of poor devoted England.

The Lady Elvira heard of the curse that had fallen upon the land, and wept many a bitter tear at the dire calamity.

Her husband had gone from her once more. At this distance of time, when we have such imperfect records of the history of those dark days, it is not for us to judge of the merits of the case, or of the right or wrong doing of those who took up arms against the king.

The brave Baron of Severnside was one of these; he could not brook to see the rights and privileges of his country trampled upon by the faithless monarch who sought to do away with all that was good, and noble, and true.

The Lady Elvira grieved that her liege lord should raise his hand against him who had been appointed by GOD to rule as sovereign; and day and night she prayed that the curse of the Almighty might not light upon a household whose chief was guilty of such a crime.

Still she tried to serve GOD with a quiet mind; still her calm faith and hope did not desert her, and she was sure that her confidence in Him would be her strength. She knew that in His own time and in His own way her prayers would be answered, and she gave herself and all those she loved into His most holy keep-

ing, and felt that they were safe there for evermore.

Many faithful Priests had left the land ; the Churches were closed, the Holy Sacrifice was no longer offered upon the Altars of the land ; all was contention, and discord, and rebellion, and the one help—even the help of the rites of Religion—was taken from the people. But GOD was in the hearts of many of them, and the trial was doing its work, purifying many a soul in the furnace of affliction.

Father Ambrose, the Baron of Severnside's chaplain, remained at his post in the Castle. He knew that GOD's judgment was upon the land, but he remembered that when all Israel was cursed for the sin of Ahab, the LORD remembered and delivered those who were still faithful to Him. And in that thought there was comfort through all those terrible days. And the Lady Elvira and her daughters prayed for themselves and all around them, and as they prayed the peace of a quiet mind came to them.

At last the king, threatened with invasion by Louis of France, the son of Philip the reigning king of that country, determined to make peace with the Pope, and to do homage to him

for his dominions. The Bishops refused to obey the dictates of the Pontiff, and the interdict which had been withdrawn when the king yielded to the authority of Rome was again laid upon the country, but this time it was disregarded, and the Churches were opened, and Christmas and Easter were celebrated with more than usual solemnity.

But of course there were still those who opposed the will of the king, and infuriated by his passions he hired bands of foreign mercenaries to come over and do the bloody work for which he thirsted. One of these bands landed on the banks of the fair River Severn. The Baron was away; the Castle in all probability was unguarded.

The king's troops under the command of one Folco, who for his cruel deeds was surnamed the Inhuman, advanced upon the building in the dead of night, but were surprised to find how strongly the walls were guarded at all points.

They soon saw that they should have to resort to the more tedious process of blockade.

The Lady Elvira in the meantime was not idle. As soon as she heard that the king's troops were advancing towards Severnside, she

gave orders that the castle should be put into a state of complete defence.

The battlements were guarded and manned by night and day, a supply of provisions was got together, so that nothing might be wanted in case the little garrison was reduced to great extremities.

Folco was obliged to withdraw his troops for a time, and in the meanwhile the Lady Elvira sent a trusty messenger to her lord, begging him to hasten to the rescue.

But the way was long and difficult, and she feared that her missive would never reach him, and that she should be left to do battle alone when Folco should return to blockade the castle.

Early in the spring the king's troops, having gone into quarters during the severe winter months, again surrounded the walls of Severn-side, and maintained so strict a blockade, that for months no one was allowed to enter or depart from the gates.

The ladies gave all the help they could ; the Lady Rhoda especially distinguished herself by her activity, and personally directed many of the defences. She encouraged those within the castle, and her fearless contempt of danger set a bright example to those around her.

The autumn was far advanced, when one day the sentinel on the wall brought the welcome news that some troops were coming to the rescue.

It was indeed the Lord of Severnside, at the head of a noble band of brave soldiers. The new comers gave battle to the enemy that day, whilst from the castle windows those poor besieged ones watched the fight, and prayed that they might be delivered from their misery. The Lady Rhoda moved bravely amongst them, as she had done from the first, whilst men marvelled at the quietness and confidence which shone on the faces of Lady Mary and her mother. No restless anxiety—no impatient longing—no signs of fear were there.

They carried food to those who defended the walls, they tended and removed the wounded, and calmly and quietly committed themselves and all around them to God. They prayed for all those who, in the hurry of that day, might be called to their last account, as well as for all those who, from the issue of the battle, should have suffering or sorrow to endure; and their prayers were heard and answered, although that brave company was not delivered from the hands of the enemy.

The fight raged fiercely. The Baron's troops were well disciplined, although they were inferior in number to those of the King, and for a time the issue of the battle seemed doubtful.

: Suddenly, as evening drew on, a bright light was seen shining through the loopholes of the castle.

For an instant all thought it was but the reflection of the setting sun; and then,—oh horrible certainty,—the keep was on fire. The flames were raging with a fury which nothing could quell, and the valley around was illuminated with a bright ruddy light.

It was an awful sight; no means of escape appeared; they must either perish in the flames, or yield to their enemies.

The Baron wrung his hands in agony, and bade his soldiers follow him. On they went, in the new strength of despair, cutting down all before them. But it was all too late,—there was a fearful crash, a cry of agony, and then nothing was to be seen of turret or keep or chapel, but smoking ruins, and bare blackened walls.

In the court stood the Lady Elvira. Her cheek was pale, but her eye sparkled, and the calmness of a quiet mind, the peace of holy re-

signation triumphed in that moment of untold, unutterable anguish.

The wife saw her husband fall beneath the sword of the foe, and yet that sweet serenity did not desert her. Father Ambrose was near; and she and her children knelt before him, and received his blessing, whilst he bade them remember that He Who supported the Saints and Martyrs of old amid the flames, was with them now, their shield and stay.

Soon the walls were battered, and the King's troops rushed madly in.

"Spare not one," said Folco; "let every one be put to the sword."

"Do knights war on women?" said the holy father.

But no one heeded his words; the Lady Elvira was mercilessly trampled under foot, whilst her daughters were carried away to a strong fortress in Normandy, where by order of the King they were detained in strict captivity. A turret of the keep of a strong fortress near Cherbourg on the seashore, was the prison of the ladies Rhoda and Mary.

Dreary indeed was their lot. They seemed forgotten by all; by all but that most loving FATHER Who never deserts His children, and

Who is nearer them in dark days than when the sun is shining upon them, and all looks bright and fair before them.

In quietness and in confidence was their strength then ; they kept the Church's hours of prayer, as their gentle mother had taught them to do. From the lonely desolate sea-girt tower hymns of praise and adoration ascended day by day to the Mercy-seat.

They gave thanks that they were considered worthy to suffer for His dear sake, Who had borne so much for them ; following His most blessed example, they prayed for their enemies ; whilst many a petition ascended from those pure lips to the Throne of Grace, for the peace and safety of their own dear country,—that fair land which they never could hope to see again. But what did it matter ? was there not another country brighter, fairer far to which GOD in His mercy would take them in His own good time ?

Months passed on, the wear and tear of that dreary prison life became almost more than the poor girls could bear. At first it had not been so hard, but now fears for the future assailed them. They wondered what the end of it would be ; and then the Lady Rhoda grew paler and thinner and weaker, the waves and storms that

had gone over her had reached the depths of the brave but tender heart, which was breaking slowly, but all the more surely.

Then another trial came to the captives, the greatest that they had yet known ; the stern governor of the fortress ordered that they should be separated ; and the Lady Mary was taken away from her dying sister, and removed to a distant turret, to pray still, to trust still, although prayer and trust were indeed harder now than they had ever been.

The Lady Rhoda meanwhile was longing for death to come and set her free from all her sufferings. She knew it could not long be delayed ; she knew that her strength was ebbing away fast : there was only one thought of earth to keep her back—how could she go away without looking upon her sister's sweet face once again, how close her eyes for ever upon the things of earth, without telling her how happy she was, without bidding her be patient to the end as she had been all through her young life?

Weakness often overpowered the lonely girl, memory often failed her, but she knew that God would accept her silent suffering, and that others were praying for her in this her hour of agony.

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A week had passed since her sister had left her, and the sick girl feared that she should die alone,—no one near to say one prayer for her parting soul, no one to close her eyes when her last hour should come.

As she thus thought, she heard a familiar footstep outside the door of her cell, and the next minute Lady Mary, and an old man clad in the garb of a Priest, stood by her side.

In a few words the story was told,—how the keeper of the Castle, one unworthy of the name of a Knight, had died in a state of intoxication at a banquet, and his successor though scarcely less cruel was not yet firmly seated in his office.

Lady Mary had prevailed upon one of the servants amid all the confusion to set her free, and also to send a Priest to her, and through God's Infinite Mercy she had been in time to see her loved one once more.

In low tremulous tones the dying girl confessed the sins of her life, and heard the words of peace and pardon pronounced by God's servant in His Name, and then she received that Precious Body and Blood Which were given and shed for her.

The words of blessing were spoken. All was

peace. The Priest and Lady Mary watched by the side of the dead.

Desolate indeed was the poor girl, now that the loved companion of her youth was taken away from her, but a deep feeling of thankfulness was in her heart, when she thought of the rest that had come to her soul after the waves and billows that had gone over it, during the last most troubled months of the Lady Rhoda's life.

The new Governor of the Fortress was not quite as hard as his predecessor had been, and he allowed Father Francis (the Priest who had ministered to Lady Rhoda at the last) to visit her sister at intervals in her prison, and take to her the consolations of religion.

He allowed her too to go out into the air and look upon the bright sunshine and the dancing glorious sea sparkling beneath its rays.

And then the Lady Mary thanked God for the mercies that had been granted her, and prayed that she might serve Him with a quiet mind in her dreary prison.

Through Father Francis she was allowed too to minister to those around her; he used to bring her herbs to prepare for the sick, and materials to make clothes for the poor, and it was

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a comfort to her to be allowed to do God's work in ever so small a way.

And in prayer and quietness, and thankfulness, the years passed on, and the Lady Mary was learning the lesson of perfect submission and patience which is the hardest lesson we can any of us learn.

Her life was desolate and lonely, but surely a Great Love watched over it; surely the captive in her little turret chamber might have been envied by kings and queens upon their throne, because she had found the only true Strength, that strength which comes out of the quietness and confidence of an assured, ever present trust in God, and in Jesus.

Kate listened attentively whilst her mother told the tale of sorrow and of endurance, and then she bent and kissed her forehead and said,

"Dear mother, if we think of the great Love that will watch over Arthur, we shall be able to serve God, and to pray to Him with a quiet mind."

And Mrs. Jocelyn smiled a sweet sad smile, for she saw that the story had done its work, and that Kate knew where to seek for strength in

this first great trial that had ever come into her young bright life.

A few more days, and Arthur full of hope and joy, and thirsting with a young soldier's eagerness for his first battle, came down to say good-bye. They were all three very brave then, perhaps when the moment for parting came, the one whose voice trembled most and whose strong frame shook with emotion was the noble Highlander himself, as he bade them take care of themselves whilst he was away.

Early in the morning they had knelt together at the Altar of GOD, and there found the strength that comes from the LORD of all strength in His own most Holy Sacrament.

They went back from the garden-gate when they had seen the last of him, back to their quiet life,—the life that for months at least would fail to be gladdened by Arthur's presence, or by those letters that used to come to them at the breakfast-table three or four times a week; they went back to pray for him, to serve GOD with the quiet mind which is most like unto the mind of CHRIST.

And so the days, and weeks, and months passed on, and there came from the Gold Coast news of dire sickness, amongst our brave troops;

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very cheerfully Arthur wrote, although the mother's watchful love detected an undercurrent of deep feeling pervading her boy's letters.

One morning they saw in the papers how greatly he had distinguished himself, how bravely and resolutely he had fought and kept the enemy at bay ; how they exulted in the news, how proud they felt of their hero, as they pored over that short record of his brave deeds. Another fortnight, and they needed all the quiet confidence that comes from God alone, for tidings came that Arthur, the brave soldier boy, was dying of fever,—and all they did was to pray more fervently than they had ever prayed before, that the most Merciful would do with him as He willed ; that His Will might be their will.

How those weeks that followed passed they never knew ; they used to look back to them in the happy days that followed, and they would have wondered how they bore them, had they not felt that out of quiet confidence and faith their strength had come ; and when at last Arthur, pale and thin, and worn-looking,—a shadow of his former self,—stood before them, they could only gaze upon him and wonder why this unspeakable mercy had been shown to them.

A few months longer, and it was the proudest day of the mother's and sister's life, when they saw the Queen pin a plain bronze cross upon their hero's breast.

## A DARK NOVEMBER DAY.

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### Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

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"LORD, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?"

"I SHOULD not have minded if he had done it once, at least I should not have been as angry as I am now, but this is the third or fourth time I have found him at it, and I cannot bear it, and I will not; and I tell you it's no good to talk to me of forgiveness, for I never will forgive him, never, if I live to be a hundred years old."

"Hush, Hugh, hush, you must not say such things, my dear."

"But I will say them, and no one can prevent it; you know, mother, how hard it is."

It was a young lad, almost a man who spoke,

upon whose face there was an expression of settled gloom, as if the offence he had received, whatever it might have been, was not likely to be either forgiven or forgotten very soon.

And his mother, a gentle old lady, sat by the fire and knitted away at her stocking. Knitting seemed to be the one employment of Mrs. Calthorpe's life ; true she was the happy grandmother of some twenty grandchildren, and it was somewhat of a labour of love to have to provide for little feet, and feet that *would* wear out their stockings sooner than any other children she had ever known, Mrs. Calthorpe said.

Hugh was his mother's youngest child, her own especial darling ; all the others had married and left her, and this boy with his bright face and loving ways was very dear to his mother's heart.

For he *was* a very affectionate, loving fellow in spite of what we have just heard him say ; he had one great fault which counterbalanced much of the good that was really in his heart ; he liked what we all like, and what we must all give up to a very great extent,—he liked his own way, quite as well if not better than most people, and if he was thwarted or things went contrary to his wishes or expectations, he did not stand

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it at all well, and the bright face used often to wear a very dissatisfied look, one that sent a pang to his kind old mother's loving nature.

"My dear, I know it *is* hard to bear things," she said now, as she laid her stocking down on the table, dropping several stitches as she moved, and she went to her boy, and pushed back the dark hair from his forehead, and timidly, as she always spoke of sacred things, even to Hugh she said, "Think of all that JESUS bore for our sakes, Hugh, and then our troubles look so small."

He was in no mood to listen to reason on that November evening; he hardly heeded her words, and the petting which he generally craved for rather put him out than otherwise.

"It's no good to talk to me, mother, you don't understand things; you couldn't unless you spent all day in the office, and heard that fellow's way of going on; no, I'll never forgive him, never."

And again came the gentle "Hush, Hugh, don't say such things."

This time the lad really pushed his mother away,—not roughly, I don't think even at his worst he would have done that; but he put his hand out, and laid it on her arm, and put her

on one side. And she took up her stocking again and sat down in her old arm-chair, whilst he paced restlessly up and down the little room.

The next day the knitting-needles were very rusty, because of all the quiet tears that had fallen upon them from the mother's eyes as she took furtive glances at her Hugh's troubled brow.

Let us have a peep behind the scenes, and see the cause of the lad's anger, and determination not to forgive the person who had so grievously offended him.

Just a year before our story begins he had been articled to a lawyer in the little town of Burlington. Mr. Tyndal had been a very old friend of his father's, and it had always been a promise that when Hugh was old enough he would take him into his office.

There was another lad there named Randall Staples, the son of a very wealthy merchant; he was not a pleasant youth; he had a great idea of his own importance, and he looked down upon the widow's darling, as vulgar minds sometimes do look down, upon those who are not as rich as themselves, and his great delight was to try and annoy him in every way.

Hugh had a friend, a crippled deformed boy, whose name was Alfred Morgan,—the friendship of the two was of very long standing. Young Calthorpe's warm generous heart was full of sympathy for Alfred's troubles, and he had learned many a lesson from the sight of the patiently-borne suffering and the gentle ways of the afflicted lad. It was impossible for Alfred to do much for himself, but he was one of a large family, and his father was in bad health. Mr. Tyndal, knowing all these circumstances, very kindly allowed the boy to come and do a day's law copying in his office whenever he felt up to it, and then Randall Staples, big bully that he was, used to try and annoy Hugh by laughing at his friend.

Alfred himself bore it bravely. Randall's one talent was a great power for drawing caricatures, and on the afternoon of which we are writing Hugh had picked up from the floor of the office a likeness, of course an exaggerated one, of Alfred. There was no mistaking it, it was drawn to the life; there was the poor little stunted figure, the hump on the back, the thin legs, which seemed hardly able to support the slight frame, the long unwieldy-looking arms, the stolid heavy expression that was usually

to be seen upon the sickly face,—the bright intelligence that came to it sometimes, the yearning, wistful, tender look that used to delight Hugh was not to be detected. Probably Randall had never seen it, and if he had, he certainly would not have been able to do justice to it,—his genius was of a very material kind, there was nothing really artistic or spiritual about it.

It was not the first time, as Hugh told his mother, that he had caught Staples at these tricks; once he had seen Alfred's eyes fixed upon a piece of paper which lay on the desk, and he had noticed how the bright colour rushed to the pale cheek, and how the boy put the thing, whatever it was, into his pocket, and bit his lip almost through to keep back the bitter tears that started to his eyes.

Afterwards, as the two walked home together, Hugh had said,

"I want to see what that was that you put into your pocket just now."

"I cannot tell you."

"Show it me then."

"I cannot."

"Alf, you must, I insist upon seeing it."

"I tell you you cannot, Hugh, it is torn up."

Hugh clenched his fist. "You were a fool to do that, I know the fellow had been up to some of his cowardly tricks, and I should have taken the paper straight to Mr. Tyndal."

"No, you would have done no such thing; indeed, Hugh, it is better not to notice it, and besides,"—and there was a look of intense pain upon Alfred's face,—“and besides, he only drew me as I am,—it was a very good likeness.”

Poor Alfred! in his humiliation,—for he could not help feeling humiliated, although he tried so hard to overcome it,—he unconsciously let out to Hugh that his suspicions had been correct, and that Randall Staples had been up to one of his cowardly tricks.

From that day a deep feeling of hatred to the rich merchant's son took possession of Hugh's heart. He could have borne, or at least he thought he could have borne anything for himself,—indeed, to do him justice, he had put up with a good deal of insolence,—but this cruel, dastardly act to his friend was more than he could stand. "He shall suffer for it, I can tell him," he said to himself, when he had parted with Alfred, "or my name is not Hugh Calthorpe."

This had happened a month before that after-

noon on which Hugh stood in his mother's little sitting-room and pained her so terribly by the words we have already quoted.

Again, as we have said, the offence had been repeated, and Hugh himself had picked up the obnoxious drawing from the floor of the office.

Randall Staples was out when this occurred ; if he had not been, there is no doubt that Hugh would have taken summary revenge for the insult offered to his friend. And Alfred himself was too ill to be at his work that day ; he was more than usually suffering, his father had told Mr. Tyndal, and when Hugh pictured to himself the poor stunted form lying on his couch, bearing all the pain GOD sent him, so patiently, his wrath increased instead of diminishing. All the way home he was working himself up into a rage, and we have seen how it exploded in his gentle mother's presence.

All the evening he was in a bad temper, there was no getting him out of it. Randall's many aggravating ways towards himself,—his proud, ungentlemanly, domineering manner,—rose up before him, adding fuel to the fire, and when at last he got up and took his candle, and said that his head ached and he must go to bed,

Mrs. Calthorpe told him she thought it was the best thing for him to do. She went into his room the last thing, as she had always done since he was a very little boy, and as she bent over him and kissed him fondly, she said,

"Hugh, darling, you must put the angry thoughts away before to-morrow morning," and Hugh only turned round with his face to the wall, and said,

"I forgot to tell you not to call me, mother ; I couldn't go *there* to-morrow."

She sighed and left him, seeing that in one way he was right ; with all that hatred in his heart he could not, dared not take his Crucified LORD into his heart, for hearts where malice and hatred dwell are no fitting resting-places for the gentle Holy JESUS in His Own Sacrament of Love.

"He must go to the Vicar on Monday," mused the poor mother, "he will help him to see how wrong this unforgiving spirit is," and then she went into her own room, and prayed for her boy.

He came down very late the next morning, just in time to swallow his breakfast very hurriedly, and accompany his mother to Church.

Just opposite him on the other side of the

nave sat Randall Staples, and a few seats in front of him was Alfred, with what Hugh always called "the Sunday look" upon his face, such a look of peace it was, the lad thought he had seen such an one upon the features of a martyr, whose faith and hope amid his dying agony, were depicted with life-like reality, in a picture which hung in the Vicar's study.

Hugh did not learn a lesson from his friend's peace and calm on that day; he could admire but he could not imitate, he believed he was angry with "that snob Staples," only on Alfred's account; he would not confess to himself that he was smarting under much personal wrong; glad to have the opportunity of resenting it, without appearing to be thinking of himself, or of his own grievances.

Is not this the case with many of us? do we not, if we do not ourselves care for a person, shrink from confessing our dislike, because we think it would look mean and petty, but directly another steps in, and becomes, as it were, a fellow-sufferer, then we allow our animus to have full play; what would have been petty on our own account becomes (we try to persuade ourselves) noble and chivalrous when we are taking up the cudgels for some one else, some

friend whom we love very dearly, just as Hugh loved Alfred.

Poor Hugh, the thoughts that he took into GOD's own House on that Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity were not fitting thoughts for the Holy Temple where the Blessed Presence specially dwells; mechanically he repeated the words of the divinely-taught prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," but he did not realize what it was that he was saying,—that on condition of *his* pardoning those who offended against *him*, he asked GOD to blot out his many sins,—and if he did not fulfil his part of the covenant, if he did not forgive every one who had wronged or offended him, could he expect pardon for all his wrong-doing, for his constant falls?

Then came the sermon, and the preacher's text that day was from the words of the Gospel, "So likewise shall your Heavenly FATHER do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

"My dear friends, do you realise the full meaning of this? do you understand that He Whose word never fails, Whose promise is ever sure, tells you and me, as He told S. Peter all those eighteen hundred years ago, that we like

the wicked servant in the Parable shall be delivered to the tormentors, unless we forgive those who have injured us,—not once, not twice, not seven times, but until seventy times seven?

“That is, we are to understand that there is to be no limit to our forgiveness,—whatever the cause of offence is, whether we are angry for ourselves or for those we love, and of course we must be angry sometimes,—we must give our full, free, unreserved pardon to our enemies; if we do not, GOD will not forgive us, we shall have our place in the land of darkness with the tormentors.

“My friends, is it difficult to forgive our neighbours? I will allow that it is,—it is very often hard to do right. A soldier does not win a battle easily or without trouble, does he? and it must cost us trouble, to win the battle of life, and gain the shores of eternity. JESUS Who forgave all the wrong that was done Him, JESUS the Sinless Sufferer, Himself taught us the lesson of perfect forgiveness.

“It is the lesson, the special lesson of this Sunday. Very soon the Advent watches will have come to us; very soon the Christmas song of peace and goodwill will be sounding in our ears; let us put from us all angry thoughts of

others, now with the ending of the Christian Year ; let us kneel before the LORD of all Love, and of all Forgiveness, Present on His Altar Throne, and tell Him that we from our hearts forgive the little wrong that has been done by others to us, because of the great, great wrong that crucified Him once, and that crucifies Him now afresh every day, and puts Him to an open shame."

Hugh knelt in that Most Holy Presence, but the words that he had heard that day had not been grafted into his heart, the old bad feelings were there when he left the Church and saw Randall Staples jump into his father's grand carriage, and drive off as though he thought everybody was envying him his riches.

In the afternoon Hugh went to see his friend Alfred ; he had made up his mind not to tell him of what had happened the day before,— "it's no use paining him," he said to himself, "and he couldn't do anything, he's too weak and gentle ; I'll take things into my own hands, the fellow shall smart for his insolence and cruelty yet."

"That was a beautiful sermon, Hugh, was it not?" said the deformed lad, looking into his friend's face.

"Yes," answered Hugh absently, "of course it was, the Vicar's sermons always are beautiful."

"But I liked this one specially, it seemed so nice to be able to do something for GOD, so nice to think that if we are kind and forgiving we are pleasing Him,—and oh, Hugh, it is easy when we think of all that JESUS bore for us."

"Yes," answered Hugh again; but he was looking out of the window, watching Alfred's little brothers and sisters at play in the garden.

"You were not at the Early Celebration, Hugh," continued the boy; "I was so sorry, I always like you to be there when I am able to go; it is so seldom that I can manage it; yesterday was one of my bad days, but I got better in the night, and I was so thankful."

"No, I couldn't go,—I—I—"

"I don't want to hear your reasons, dear Hugh," said Alfred, fearing in his humility that Hugh should think he was in any way reproaching him for his absence, "of course you must judge for yourself; only I like you to be there."

"Poor old Alf," and Hugh leant lovingly over his friend's couch; "poor old Alf, I wish I were as good as you are, as patient, and gentle, and forgiving."

"Please don't say that, Hugh, indeed I'm

not patient ; it is hard to bear things sometimes, but I do try to forgive because of being forgiven."

This time the tell-tale blood rushed to Hugh's cheek,—

"My mother will be waiting tea for me," he said, "I must be off. Good-bye, Alfred ; we shall meet to-morrow."

But little did those two lads who loved each other so well, know what would transpire ere they met again.

It was Monday morning ; Randall Staples sat lazily before his desk in Mr. Tyndal's office, Hugh sat at his, working steadily.

"I say, young grinder, the governor is out for the day, and I want to go for a lark ; I'll give you five shillings to buy a new neck-tie, yours is looking uncommonly shabby, if you'll do a bit of this paper for me, and let me get off. I can tell Fowler (the head-clerk) that old Tyndal gave me leave to take a half-holiday."

Hugh looked up proudly.

"You do not know to whom you are speaking," he said, "it is not my way to connive at lying and deceit."

For answer there was a long low whistle.

"Oh, indeed, my fine fellow, and perhaps you wish to insinuate that it's mine."

"Your own words prove it."

"Take care what you are about, or I'll tell old Tyndal of your insolence."

Then Hugh rose from his seat, and stood before the other :

"Look here, Staples, I have a tongue in my head, and I can speak to old Tyndal too,—in fact I had made up my mind to go to him to-day, if he had been at home. I can stand your repeated insults to me ; I cannot stand your cruelty to my friend."

"To your friend ? I don't understand you."

"I will explain. Yesterday, I picked up a caricature of Morgan,—a cowardly thing ; turning his misfortune into ridicule, and it was done by you."

"Granted ; I did draw a likeness of Morgan, I am in the habit of sketching all my friends, and he has had his turn."

"More than his turn," answered Hugh, "and you know you are not speaking the truth,—you know that four or five times you have left these things about so that he might see them : he did see one once."

“He did, did he? I am glad of that; and what did he think of it?”

There was a moment's silence, then the little office-boy who was in the outer room heard a scuffle, a cry, a fall, and when he ran in to see what it meant, Staples was lying stretched upon the floor, the blood gushing from his mouth, and Hugh, his whole face distorted by passion, was standing over him.

“Oh, sir, you've killed him,” said the frightened boy, and Hugh looked upon the pale lips, and upon the closed eyes, and there came to him the thought of his gentle mother, and of all the grief and sorrow that in his madness he had brought upon her,—he did not speak, he seized his hat, and rushed wildly down the staircase into the quiet street.

No one heeded him : he was well known in the place, and he often went up to Town for Mr. Tyndal, and those who saw him now if they thought about him at all imagined that he was hurrying to the station to catch the twelve o'clock express.

And they were right ; he had a few shillings in his pocket, and he had made up his mind to go to London and hide there ; he had never meant to do what he had done, never meant

to kill Staples, for in his fright he firmly believed the boy's words, and thought that he was dead.

And now, oh GOD, forgive him ! he was a murderer : and if he was found he would be hanged : and his mother's grey hairs would indeed be brought down with sorrow to the grave. Of his own sin he could not think yet : in that first hour of agony it was of his mother that he thought.

He managed to catch the express. Another two hours and he was alone in the great city, homeless, friendless, penniless.

In the years that were to come to him, bringing with them mingled joys and sorrows, that November day stood out before all others, the darkest, dreariest, gloomiest of all his life. All through the day he wandered through the crowded streets, wondering whether the passers by knew who and what he was,—a murderer, with the mark of Cain upon his brow.

He heard the bells from a church tower ringing for Evensong : he was tired and weary ; he would go in and sit down. Oh, surely, surely he might find shelter there in GOD's own House.

He went in ; he knelt down ; and as he said

the words of the most perfect prayer the full sense of his guilt came upon him : those who saw him wondered what made the noble looking lad weep so quietly and silently as he sat on in a distant corner when service was over, evidently waiting to speak to the Priest.

He told his tale to GOD's own minister, not seeking to hide or palliate anything, confessing the long cherished hatred, the personal wrongs under which he had smarted, and then coming to the bitter end, the end that had brought him to his present misery.

"I will go home to-night by the mail-train, and give myself up as his murderer."

And the clergyman did not tell him that perhaps things were not as bad as in his grief he believed them to be, for he thought that the discipline was salutary for the poor broken-hearted lad.

"You are not fit to travel to-night, my son ; to-morrow morning you shall leave by the first train ; I will take you home with me now."

"Oh, sir, are you not afraid of me ?"

"No, for my mission is one of mercy and of love."

The next morning in the cold grey dawn of

the November day Hugh Calthorpe, looking years older than he had done when we first made his acquaintance only three days before, started for Burlington by the earliest train he could get.

How he stood that dreary journey he never knew ; how he walked up the street and knocked at his mother's door, he never could remember ; he must see her, he thought, before—oh, horrible thought—before he was locked up for murder.

There were lights in the little room in which she always sat ; the shutters were partly closed, and the door was half open. He saw the dear old head leaning upon the table, and the big Bible was there, just as it always used to stand on other mornings.

"Mother," said Hugh.

She raised her tear-stained face, and threw her arms round him.

"Oh, my darling, GOD forgive you."

"Mother, I am going to the police-station, to give myself up as a murderer."

"Hugh, dearest, it is not as bad as that,—not at least in reality ; but oh, my darling, the hatred was in your heart, and whoso hateth his brother is a murderer."

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He could hardly realise what she meant, but she drew him down upon his knees, and he knelt there as he used to kneel and say his prayers when he was a little boy, and then she told him that Randall Staples had only been stunned ; and that Alfred's father had gone to Town to look for him (Hugh) and bring him back.

Two hours later Hugh stood in the rich merchant's house. Mr. Staples was a just man enough ; and angry though he was at the treatment his son had received, he had the sense to see that Hugh had been very much aggravated, and when he met him at the door and heard his trembling entreaty to be allowed to see Randall, he himself led him to the lad's room.

"Staples, will you forgive me? I cannot be happy until you do ; you don't know how I have suffered since yesterday, when I thought I had killed you."

"It was not your fault that you didn't," answered Randall surlily.

"No, I know it was not," was the humble penitent reply ; "it was God's mercy that saved me. Staples, I have been a murderer at heart for a long time, forgive me now."

"All right : I wasn't much hurt, and—and—I dare say I deserved it,—that little fellow Alfred was here last night ; I can promise you I'll never laugh at him again ; he is good. I believe in *his* religion."

"Yes, indeed you may."

Hugh did not resent the insolent tone which said plainly enough, "and I don't believe in yours."

"Yes, indeed you may ; there are very few like Alfred," and then he held out his hand, which the other reluctantly took, and went away.

Those who knew him said the brightness had gone out of Hugh's life on that November day when he sinned so deeply : it may have been so—at least in the eyes of the world—but his mother and Alfred think that his real true joy began after that terrible fall ; and Randall Staples, who was very kind to Alfred now, condescended to remark "that that fellow Calthorpe was not half a bad fellow."

The remark was made to the crippled boy, and the bright colour rose to the pale cheek, as Alfred answered, with more indignation in his tone than he generally allowed to appear there, "Bad ! you don't know half how good he is, how

patient and self-denying he has been with me, how weary and desolate my life would have been without him ; I thank GOD every day for sending him to me."

Randall Staples opened his eyes and looked wonderingly at Alfred.

"You cannot be thankful at all for such a life as yours is," answered Randall abruptly.

The speech sounded unkind, but it was not really meant to be so, and Alfred with the keen perception often granted to those upon whom GOD has laid His chastening Hand, took it as it was meant, and answered gently,

"Yes, I *am* thankful, because it is such an honour to suffer for JESUS' sake, it seems to bring me nearer to Him," and Alfred turned away his head as though he were ashamed of the unwonted exhibition of feeling.

The simple, earnest words did their work. One day Randall Staples stood by the side of Alfred's couch.

"Alfred," he said, in trembling tones, "will you pray for me to-morrow? for then I am to make my first Communion,—I was confirmed two years ago, but I turned away from the Blessing then, and now after all my sins, Mr. Thorn-dale says I may go."

"I am so glad, so thankful," was the quiet answer.

"Alfred, it is you who brought me to think of these things, you, and one other, and that other was Hugh Calthorpe."

# OUR REFUGE AND STRENGTH.

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**Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.**

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“Sufficient is Thine Arm alone,  
And our defence is sure.”

**B**ILL Nobbs is the hero of this story—and Bill Nobbs was a small boy of some eleven years old when I first made his acquaintance, an ugly dirty little fellow as it was possible to meet in a day's walk, and yet from the moment I saw him I conceived a strange liking for him, there was something so true and honest about him, you had only to look into the round blue eyes, and see that Bill would not steal, or tell a story, or do a great many wrong things that other boys—especially boys in this great wicked city of London, do every day. Poor

things ! many of them have never been taught what is right, never been told of all God's love for His children, never been baptized and received the great Gift of the HOLY SPIRIT to help them in the troubles and difficulties of their daily lives.

But some, alas, have been taught their duty ; some have fallen away from the Grace that was given them, and have grieved the Gentle Dove that speaks to every Christian child of the care of a most loving FATHER ; if only he will obey that FATHER'S will, and try to be good and pure and true.

My friend Bill Nobbs *had* learned what was right, he had been brought up in a workhouse in the country, and as the Chaplain of the establishment was a very holy hard-working Priest, the poor little fatherless and motherless ones who lived within those great red-brick walls were taught their duty to GOD and man, and were spoken to very often of the Angel Guardian whom God had sent to each one of them when they were baptized, to keep them safe from all harm and evil.

Bill was eleven years old when he first came to London ; several of the boys from the workhouse were brought up by the master, and placed

in situations. Bill was apprenticed to a shoemaker ; he was very unhappy, poor fellow, for he had always been treated kindly until now, and every day he was beaten and kicked and half starved, and sometimes when as evening came he used to wander about the streets in the neighbourhood of the shoemaker's house, and look wistfully into the faces of the boys and girls who walked along, some of them neat and trim, others dirty and ragged, and he wondered whether there were any of them as miserable and lonely as he was—whether the homes to which they were going were as dreary as that loft in the shoemaker's house where he slept upon a heap of dirty straw with nothing to cover him on the cold winter nights when the wind howled so piteously, and the keen cutting blast, and the driving rain used to come in through the broken window, and make him shiver so terribly, that when he woke up in the morning he could hardly stand, his poor limbs felt so bruised and battered.

One evening he was more than usually wretched—he felt ill, and he knew that he had been very stupid over his work, and when at last it was too dark to do anything more, and his master and his wife had betaken themselves to the public

house at the corner, at which they were very frequent guests; poor Bill stole out into the streets and walked on and on for a very long time—he knew not whither he was going; he thought of his Guardian Angel that the clergyman at the workhouse used to tell him about; and he wondered whether he was with him now. “I don’t think he can be,” mused the poor little fellow, “I don’t think he would let me be so unhappy as I am now. I’ve said my prayers every day since I comed to this here big London, and I’ve tried ever so hard to be good; I’ve not stole so much as a crusty when the missis’ back was turned, though I might have done it sometimes, and I had thought that the Angel would have took care of me and I don’t think he have,” and then poor Bill began to cry, for he had lost his way, and his feet were very sore, and his back was stiff from the effects of a beating he had had the day before, and he did not know how he should ever get home that night, and where was he to sleep, and what was he to do?

“Hallo, youngster, what are you snivelling about?”

Bill looked up, for there was something kind and cheery in the sound of the voice, and he

saw a man with an old barrel organ standing before him, and on the organ was the most comical monkey, dressed in a little red coat, and with a hat and plumes worthy of a general officer upon his head. Bill was so entranced with the sight of the monkey that he paid little heed to the man.

"Well, youngster, you haven't told me yet what you are snivelling at."

"Please, sir, I've lost my way."

"Where do you live?"

"In Hart Lane."

"Where's that? I never heard of it afore as I knows of."

"Out Drury Lane way."

The man gave a long low whistle.

"You *have* lost your way sure enough, my lad, that's to say, you're miles out of it; why, we're most out at Clapham; it will take you an hour and a half or more to get home."

"I can't go home, I'm so tired."

The organ man gazed into the little weary face, and an expression of intense compassion came into the small twinkling eyes. "Another of them little unfortunates," he muttered, "as I sees every day in my rounds, but this one looks worse than most of 'em, and he looks more

honest, perhaps he'd suit me; I wonder if he'd come; I'll try him."

"Your father and mother will be waiting for you, my man, won't they?"

A sickly hopeless despairing smile was upon Bill's face as he answered, "I haven't got ne'er a one."

"Ha, I thought as much; who do you live with? an aunt or an uncle? there's swarms in London as goes by that name."

"No."

And then Bill told the story we already know, and Benjamin Norris, that was the organ man's name, believed the boy's story, and felt very sorry for him.

"Look here, youngster, I wants some one to take care of Jacko, and to collect the pence whilst I'm a-playing the tunes; will you come and live with me?"

"I dare not, sir; he would catch me, and then he would beat me dreadfully."

"No, he wouldn't; I'm a-going away from London to-morrow, and he'll not take the trouble to look after you."

"Yes, I'll come; oh, take me anywhere away from him."

It was that night that I made Bill Nobbs' ac-

quaintance ; I was a young doctor just beginning practice, and I had taken an especial fancy to Jacko, whom I met constantly with his master, as I was going my rounds in the morning.

On one occasion Benjamin told me that he feared the monkey was not well, and I had prescribed for him with considerable success, and his master was excessively grateful to me in consequence. I had just taken off my boots and was going in for an hour's hard reading, when my servant told me in an indignant tone that that there organ man insisted upon seeing me, "he won't take no refusal, sir, although I told him you was engaged very particular indeed."

I went into the hall, and there stood Benjamin.

"I was a-going to ask you, sir, if you could give me some of them pills that did Jacko such a power of good."

"Why, is the monkey ill again?"

"No, sir, never was better, but I've found a boy in the streets who is very bad, I've got him at my place ; and I thought you'd be sure to be able to do something for him—he's a poor miserable chap, and he's been treated disgraceful."

"I will come and see him," I said ; so I gave

up the idea of reading, and put on my boots, and prepared to accompany Benjamin to his residence, wherever it might be.

It was not an uncomfortable room to which he conducted me; there was a bright cheerful fire burning in the grate, and some bread and cheese and beer upon the table, and on the bed lay Jacko fast asleep after his day's work, whilst by his side was poor Bill, his eyes bright, his cheeks burning with fever.

I saw at a glance that he was very ill, and I told Benjamin that it would be impossible to think of moving him at present.

"All right, sir," was the cheery answer; "I've took him, as you may say, for better for worse, and it seems that the worst have come pretty soon. Jacko and me was going into the country to-morrow, but we must put it off, it won't make much difference. I had a boy of my own once, sir," continued the honest fellow, whilst I thought I saw a tear in his little twinkling eye, "he was took from me, when he was about as big as this chap, and then soon afterwards his mother went to join him, and because of my Dick, as I loved so much, I have often thought as how I should like to have a boy to live along of me and look after Jacko and the pence, and I liked this one's

face when I saw him standing crying on the bridge this evening."

I had always liked the organ man, but I felt that I liked him better now than I had ever done before, and the next day and many days afterwards, I visited his room, and did the best I could for the boy he had "found."

He and Jacko were generally absent on these occasions. After the first four and twenty hours, during which I thought it was very likely that Bill would die, but which through God's mercy he pulled through; Benjamin was of course obliged to look after his own interest, and Bill used to lie upon the bed quite happy and contented, too weak to think much, but very grateful for all that was done for him, brightening up whenever I went in, which I did two or three times a day, for there was only an old deaf woman who lived in the opposite room to look after the boy, and I had not much faith in her powers of watching him as carefully as he required to be watched.

More than a fortnight passed away, and I had not had much conversation with Bill, but one Sunday afternoon I went in and found him sitting up at the table looking quite convalescent.

"The master has took Jacko for a walk," he

said ; "he wanted to go ; and I've been trying to read, but the words swims so, and I can't manage it."

"Shall I read to you, Bill?"

"Oh, sir, if you would!" and he handed me an old torn Prayer Book, on the fly leaf of which the name of 'William Nobbs' was inscribed about half-a-dozen times in very illegible characters.

"What shall I read, my boy?"

"What's to-day, please, sir?"

"Sunday."

"Yes, I knows that, of course, because the master and Jacko ain't at work ; but what Sunday—not Advent, is it? I know Christmas ain't very far off, because November had come before I was took bad."

"No, it is not Advent yet ; it is the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity."

"Then, please will you read me the Collect, and the Epistle and Gospel. I likes to hear it—we used always to hear it at the House when we went to chapel, and of afternoons the Chaplain used to explain it all to us, and I used to like to hear about God and JESUS, and the Holy Angels ; would you explain things to me a bit, please, sir? the master says you are awful clever, and you knows everything."

"That's hardly true, Bill, but it so happens that I teach a class of boys on Sunday mornings when I have time, and so I'll try and do my best for you."

I read just what he asked me to read, and he listened attentively, and then he said, "Please, sir, what's a refuge? what do it mean when we say that God is our Refuge?"

"Our help and our shelter, Bill. A Refuge from the storm, a shelter from the heat, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. That is what GOD is to us; if we pray to Him with all our hearts, no harm can ever happen to us, for even if sorrow or misfortune come into our lives, He is sure to be our Refuge, we can live in the light of His love, and know that He will take care of us.

"But we must ask all things faithfully, Bill; we must believe when we pray that God will send us what is best for us; we must not ask Him for the good things of earth; we must simply pray that in His boundless unerring love He will give us what He knows to be right and best."

"That night as I was so unhappy," said Bill, "when the master found me, and brought me home to live with him and Jacko, I thought as

my Guardian Angel had gone away from me, and I prayed GOD to send him back ; he hadn't really gone, had he, sir ?”

“No, my boy, of course he had not ; he is nearer us in trouble, Bill, than at any other time ; he never never turns away from us unless we sin very often, and cease to be sorry for our sin, and then for a while he hides his face from us, but he is ready to come back at the first sigh of penitence, at the first tear that we shed because of our wrong doing.”

“That's what the Chaplain used to say,” said Bill, with an air of supreme satisfaction ; “I will try to be good, sir, and if I should be in trouble again, I'll try and think of your words, that GOD is our Refuge and never leaves us nor forsakes us.”

Then I went on and spoke to him about the teaching of the Gospel, and of the lesson it taught us to be submissive to all those whom GOD had put over us. Just as JESUS bade the Pharisees and Herodians render unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, and unto GOD the things that were GOD's, so must we be obedient to those whom we serve—to the masters and mistresses God has given us.

“'Twas like that the Chaplain used to speak,”

said poor Bill again, but this time there was an anxious troubled expression upon his thin wan face.

"What is it, my boy?" I asked, as I saw the great tears welling into his eyes.

"Please, sir, I've been thinking I ought not to have come away from the shoemaker; he was my master, I was sent there, I ought not to have left."

I knew what he meant, and I felt that the honest boyish mind had taken a firm grasp at the right, and that Bill would not easily be turned from his purpose.

"Could I walk so far as Drury Lane to-morrow, do you think, sir? 'twill be awful hard" (the tears were falling fast now) "to leave the new Master and Jacko, but I must go back."

"Not to-morrow, Bill," I said; "will you trust the matter to me? and I will go to Drury Lane and speak to the shoemaker, and tell him you are willing to return to him if he wants you."

"Yes, please, sir," and there was a deep-drawn sigh, and then I heard the boy murmur, "God is our Refuge and Strength."

The next evening I went to visit my little patient; I was the bearer of joyful news; the

shoemaker and his wife had made up their minds to go to Australia, and were very glad to be quit of the lad. "He wasn't a bad fellow," they said, "though he didn't take kindly to the trade; but he was very honest, which was more than could be said for most of his kind."

Poor Bill! he tried to be very brave when he saw me; Jacko was sitting by his side having his tea, and Benjamin was out. I saw the boy hide his face against the monkey's soft coat, and then he said in a little tremulous voice, "When am I to go, sir?"

"Not at all, Bill," and I told him all, whereupon he took to hugging Jacko so violently that I was afraid he would strangle him; then Benjamin came in, with some winkles in a newspaper, and I was asked to sit down and have some tea, and we were a very happy trio as we drew our chairs round the little round table, and I dare say Jacko was very happy too, but he only showed his joy by the quantity of food of which he partook.

"Winkles is what he likes better than anything," said Benjamin; and he certainly did ample justice to his pet delicacy.

The next Sunday I took Bill to church, and I

shall never forget the boy's delight at the beauty of the service, and at the lovely music, which he said must be like what the Angels sang in heaven.

He had tried to persuade Benjamin to accompany us, but the organ man said he liked saying his prayers and reading his chapter at home, and Bill dared not argue with him.

"I didn't know what to say, sir," he said, "but whenever I says my prayers I means to ask GOD to teach the new master to go to Church; and surely He will, for I *will* ask faithfully, sir, like you said we was to."

I wished Bill good-bye on that Sunday night; I had advised Benjamin to get into the country as soon as possible, as the best chance of recruiting the boy's strength.

"We means to come back in the spring, sir," said my little patient, "the master says as he and Jacko always comes to London with the Queen and the Prince, and all the grand company."

I smiled and bade the boy farewell, and I looked at the ugly, honest face, and felt that I should be very glad to see the organ man and his companions when the spring-time came.

The winter that followed saw me laid on a bed of sickness, and I was ordered to seek for health in some milder and more genial clime than this treacherous England of ours. I got an appointment as surgeon of a ship bound for Australia ; I made several voyages in her, and it was five or six years before I grew weary of my seafaring life, and resolved once more to settle down in England.

There was a practice to be sold in one of the midland counties at a place called Treverton. I went to look at the little town, liked it, and finally settled there.

I knew that there were some coal mines in the neighbourhood, and that part of my work would be attending the colliers and their families ; but I rather liked dealing with this class of people ; I was told that they were a wild, lawless, undisciplined set, and this rather increased my interest in them. One night there came a thundering knock at my surgery door.

"Tell the doctor to come at once," said a voice, which I recognised as that of Bunker the policeman ; "there's mischief going on, the men have been firing upon the master's house, and some one is hurt, I don't quite know who."

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I seized my hat and great coat, and armed myself with my huge stick, and Bunker and I walked on as fast as we could to where the lurid light from the mines shone with strange unnatural brilliancy.

"Who's hurt?" said Bunker, as we approached the colliers' huts.

"Bill Nobbs," was the answer.

"Bill Nobbs," I repeated, "who is he, Bunker?"

"A chap as is the best of the lot,—a young fellow not more than seventeen or eighteen years old I take it, but with the sense in his head of seventy or eighty."

"Does he live with one Benjamin Norris, an organ man?"

The policeman looked at me wonderingly, "Lawk, sir, fancy your knowing old Norris, why he've been dead these four years, and Jacko the monkey died soon after his master. The three came here one day in the summer, and Benjamin he had a stroke, and they couldn't go on no further; the boy Bill nursed him well, and took the Parson to him, and made his last days very happy; and then when he was left alone, he thought he'd like to stay on here, and work in the mines; a better young fellow, as I have

said before, never was, always going to Church, and never laughed out of doing his duty,—'twill be a bad job for us all if he's badly hurt, he was one of the few we could rely upon. How did it all happen, Tom?" continued Bunker, addressing the man who had told us that Nobbs was hurt.

"I can tell you all about it, sir, for I happens to have seen it. They had a meeting at ten o'clock under the big oak, and they talked a lot about their rights; they was all of them rather the worse for liquor, and then they agreed that they would go to Mr. Stansfield's house and fire upon it. Bill Nobbs and me passed just at that time; I had been into the town to get a powder for my youngest as is cutting its teeth, and Bill had been to see Betsy Norman's boy as is bad. We heard all they said, and they saw us, and called us to come and be men, and help them. I think I should have gone, sir, but Bill held me back. 'He is our master,' he said, 'perhaps he have not been very kind to us, but so long as we serve him we are bound to obey him and be true to him.' I felt a strange choking sensation in my throat; it was the old lesson of all those years ago being acted over again now."

“And what then?” I asked.

“They were very angry when we would not join them, and I heard one of them say, ‘It’s that young sneak, Bill Nobbs,—he’ll peach, see if he won’t.’ I shan’t forget how he answered, ‘I will save the master if I can, I will warn him of his danger;’ he looked as brave as a young lion as he stood there with the moon shining upon him, and I seed him take off his cap, and look at the stars, and then he runned off as fast as he could to the great house. He stood on the step and rang the bell fit to pull it down; and I heard him cry, ‘You are in danger, sir, look out.’ The others had come up to him by this time, and one of them fired, and he fell, and they say he’s mortal bad,—but there ain’t a doubt that he saved the master’s life to-night at the risk of his own.”

‘We had been walking as fast as we could through the dark woods, and now we reached the cottage where Bill had been carried.

I should have known the lad anywhere, although he had improved very much in appearance since I last saw him. He was a fine, stalwart young fellow now, with just the same honest expression upon his face that had first won my heart in the old days.

His eyes were closed, and he was breathing heavily, and those who stood round him were trying to staunch the blood which flowed from his breast. I poured some cordial down his throat, and he revived and looked at me.

"It's very good of you to come and see me, sir," he said, as if it was the most natural thing in the world for me to be there.

I could not speak, I saw that I had come there to see Bill die.

A further examination of his wound proved to me that it was mortal. He looked up at me anxiously,

"I can't get better, can I? indeed I want to know the truth."

"No, Bill, I don't think you can."

A smile came upon his face.

"I've no one to leave behind me," he said, "no mother, nor sister, nor brother, I'm all alone in the world, now that Benjamin and Jacko are dead."

Then he lay quite still for a little time, and once more he spoke.

"I've to thank you for a great deal, sir; I've always thought of Him Who is our Refuge and

Strength, and surely He'll take care of me to the end."

The clergyman came, and Bill received his last Communion ; and when the solemn Service was over, Mr. Stansfield stood by his side.

"Nobbs, I have come to thank you for saving my life, and that of my children ; if it had not been for you we should have been fired upon in our beds and killed,—tell me how I can show my gratitude ; is there any one——"

"No, sir, no one, I'm all alone,—he as fired upon me was a stranger, sir, he's gone away they say,—for my sake will you forgive the others?—they'll serve you better now, sir, I am sure they will."

There was a sharp struggle in Mr. Stansfield's mind between justice and gratitude, but when he looked at the dying boy he could not refuse his last request.

"I forgive them," he said, "and I will try and be a better master to them than I have hitherto been."

"Thank you, sir," and there was a smile of great joy upon Bill's face.

He never spoke again, at least nothing intelligible. As I leaned over him at the last I

fancied I heard the words, "Our Refuge and Strength in life, and in death."

I have seen many strange and touching sights in my life, but I don't know that I ever saw one more strange or more touching than that funeral which wended its way through the quiet streets of Treverton on that autumn morning upon which Bill Nobbs was carried to his lonely grave.

Desolate enough had been the boy's life ; no father, nor mother, nor brother, nor sister walked behind the coffin ; no tears were shed by any one to whom poor Bill was bound by any tie of blood. But hundreds followed that procession which may have looked sad to mortal eye, but which told of such joy unspeakable to him whose "toils were o'er;" and autumn flowers lay in profusion upon the violet pall, and wreaths that told of victory after the strife had been placed there by those who had learned to love the honest, manly, true-hearted lad.

Tenderly and reverently the rough working men laid the coffin before the chancel steps, and the Holy Sacrifice was offered for the peace of Bill's soul.

Then there was a pause ; a heavy tread

sounded up the aisle, and Mr. Stansfield, looking very weary and tired, stood amongst his work-people.

He spoke a few words to the Priest, and then in trembling tones he said,

“My friends, I promised him who lies there that I would be a better master to you than I had been ; will you pray to the GOD he served so faithfully, and ask Him to help me to do my duty to you?”

There was not a dry eye in the Church then, for somehow those poor rough people felt that the bright, active, young life had not been taken from them in vain.

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“Brother, now thy toils are o’er,  
Fought the battle, won the crown,  
On life’s rough and barren shore  
Thou hast laid thy burden down.  
Grant him, LORD, eternal rest  
With the spirits of the blest.

“Through death’s valley dim and dark,  
JESUS guides thee in the gloom,  
Shows thee where His footprints mark  
Tracks of glory through the tomb.  
Grant him, LORD, eternal rest  
With the spirits of the blest.

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"CHRIST the sower sows thee here :  
When the eternal day shall dawn,  
He will gather in the ear  
On that Resurrection morn.  
Grant him, LORD, eternal rest  
With the spirits of the blest."

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# PARDON THROUGH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.

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**Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.**

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“ But most of all I feel Thee near  
When from the good priest’s feet  
I go absolved in fearless love  
Fresh toils and cares to meet.”

THE wintry wind was sighing and moaning  
through the leafless trees; the pale moon  
was shining in the dark leaden sky ; the stars  
came out one by one, emblems of the Eyes of  
Infinite Love that are ever watching over us,  
ever bending down in mercy and in pity upon  
the children whom GOD created, whom JESUS  
has redeemed, whom the Holy Spirit sanctifies.

The soft light of that moon and of those  
tender watchful stars fell upon a house in one

of the streets of the great manufacturing town of Barton.

In a little room half way up a staircase two lads were lying upon two little white beds ; one of them was fast asleep, the other was tossing restlessly from side to side, sometimes muttering some almost unintelligible words, sometimes sitting up and looking round him anxiously, and then falling back upon his pillow, and once more courting that gentle sleep that would not come to him.

Harry Morton and his brother James were orphans ; their father, a well-to-do tradesman, had died some two or three years before our story begins ; their mother had gone to her rest when her boys were respectively three and four years old, and they had been left in charge of a faithful old nurse, for their father had been too much occupied with his business to have much time to give to them ; he used to have them down to play with him of an evening when the day's work was done, and afterwards when they grew older he used to ask how they were getting on at school, and just glance at the lessons they were doing, and on Sundays he would take them to Church morning and evening, to the old parish Church which was all boxed up with high

pews, where Harry and James used to amuse themselves by peeping over into the aisle, and watching the tall beadle with his green coat and silver lace and cocked hat, walking up and down as though the whole Church belonged to him.

They considered him a far more important person than the old clergyman who had held the living for fifty-five years, and who boasted that there had not been a single alteration in the way of performing the service since the day he read himself in.

Mr. Morton was an honest man, but he was not a religious man, and all that the boys learned about the things of God were derived from the Bible stories old Nurse used to tell them when they were quite little fellows; their catechism they were made to say once a week at school like so many parrots; but they were never taught its meaning, they knew nothing of the real, true blessings of the Holy Sacraments which are necessary to salvation.

They grew up fine manly boys, every one said that there was not such a good-looking clever fellow to be found in all Barton as young Harry Morton. And James was a nice lad too, they said, only he couldn't be named in the same

breath with Harry,—he might be good of course, they supposed he was, but he had not his brother's bright pleasant manners; Harry always had a kind word for every one, no matter who it was, and James was rather shy and reserved, and seemed not to care to put himself out to make himself agreeable to all the world, in fact he was rather inclined to shun people sometimes, and to live very much to himself.

There were some who could tell of many a kindly deed performed in secret, of many an act of self-denial of which James Morton and those who had received the benefit alone knew,—which God Who seeth in secret would some day reward openly. They were the outcome of a generous noble heart; they were not in those days done out of love to God; but it was the boy's natural disposition always to think first of others and last of himself.

When Mr. Morton died, every one thought that he had died a rich man,—it was not the case,—by the time all was settled and his debts paid, it was found that there was but a very scanty provision left for his boys; he had left everything in a very confused state. The end had come very suddenly; he had been quite well in the morning, in the evening he com-

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plained of illness,—his sons helped him to bed, and he looked at them lovingly and said, "God bless you, my lads, I have not taught you all I ought to have taught you, I have forgotten a great many things that I once knew, God forgive the many sins of my life."

He never spoke again, and Harry and James were left at the respective ages of fourteen and fifteen years, to fight the battle of life for themselves.

Troubles came upon them fast enough, they had never known what poverty was, and now they had to face it, and to shift for themselves, and earn their own living.

There were many in Barton who had known and respected their father, and who stretched out the right hand of fellowship to them in their trouble, and each of them obtained a situation in Barton, Harry in a coal merchant's office, James in a haberdasher's shop.

It happened that one evening not very long after Mr. Morton's death, the boys were sitting in the little room in one of the back streets of the town, whither they had removed when the old house where they had spent all the years of their young life had been sold, and there came a low, timid knock at the door.

The next minute a man whom they both recognised as John Sandford, their father's old foreman, stood before them.

He had left Barton some three or four years before, on account of his wife's health; he had been a hale, prosperous looking fellow then, he was pale and miserable and cadaverous enough now: he had lost his wife, and six or seven little children were left on his hands, and the world had gone all wrong with him; somehow or other everything had been against him—nothing that he had undertaken had prospered.

"I didn't know you were in Barton, John," said Harry cordially; "sit down, and have a cup of tea."

John sat down; but he looked anxious and awkward, as if something were on his mind, which he was longing, and yet dreaded to bring out.

He asked a great many questions of the lads, but did not seem to heed their answers, and at last he fumbled in his pocket, and brought out an old dirty looking piece of paper, and then with a mighty effort the poor fellow spoke.

"Master Harry, Master James, you'll believe

I wouldn't have troubled you if I could have anyway helped it ; but my Minnie, that's my eldest girl, is dying of consumption, and they said as how the change back to her native place might do her a bit of good, and she wanted to come, so I brought them all back last night, and I've put them all into a little cottage in Cheap Street, and—and—" and poor John laid his head upon the table and fairly sobbed.

"What is it, John?" said Harry, in his bright, pleasant, cheery way, "can we help you?"

"Oh, Master Harry, it goes to my heart to do it, seeing you in this little room, and hearing how you are working, I don't want it all,—I shouldn't ask for a penny, but for Minnie's sake ; but ever so little would be a help just now, and I should be so thankful," and the poor man put the dirty piece of paper into the boy's hand, and Harry, and James (who was looking over his brother's shoulder) saw that it was an acknowledgment in their father's handwriting of ten pounds, which he had borrowed some years before from his foreman,—“oh, Master Harry, Master James, I'm so sorry.”

"It shall be paid," said Harry confidently, "you may quite trust us, John."

"Yes, sir, I am sure of that."

"But, Harry dear, we have no money, we have only five shillings in the world ; it will take a long long time before we can do it ; had we not better tell John the truth, and say that we will do our best, and pay him little by little ?"

James spoke in a whisper, but Harry did not heed his words ; "Be quiet," was all he said, "leave things to me, I am the eldest."

And thus rebuked, James went back to his place, and listened wonderingly, whilst Harry talked on, promising John that he certainly should be no loser through them.

Poor John himself hardly knew what to say ; his needs were immediate,—Minnie lying on her couch in that poor little cottage in Cheap Street, was craving for food ; and her father had none to give her, and no money wherewith to buy any.

He got up at last to say good-bye, and Harry seemed somewhat glad to get rid of him, and breathed a sigh of relief when the door closed upon him.

"Of course we must pay him," he said, "as soon as we can."

"Yes," answered James, "I've been thinking how we could manage to live for less ; we might have meat only three days in the week, and I

think we could do with a bit less fire, and then if we could let poor John have five shillings a week think what a comfort it would be to him."

"It wouldn't be worth while doing that," answered Harry confidently, "I should not like to do it in that way, we must pay the whole sum down."

James sighed. "I don't think we shall ever be able to manage it," he said.

"Trust me," was the answer, "it will be all right."

That same evening one of John Sandford's little girls told her father that a boy had appeared at the door of the cottage carrying in his hand a bag of oranges: "They are for Minnie," he said, and he ran away as fast as he could.

"What was he like, my dear?"

"I don't know, father, it was so dark, and his cap was pulled down over his face; he was a very funny boy indeed, he spoke so fast, and appeared in such a hurry."

"God bless him, whoever he was," said poor John Sandford, and Minnie lay back contentedly, eating her orange and saying how nice and cool and pleasant it was; and she too said, "God bless him," softly, and then she turned to her

father and said, "How kind some folks are, father, ain't they?"

Harry Morton went out that evening to meet some of his companions, of whom he was the life and soul with those merry ways of his, and the countless number of songs and anecdotes with which he was in the habit of amusing his friends; and James stayed at home, and went supperless to bed,—there was only that five shillings in the old box, which was to keep Harry and himself for the next two days: there had been sixpence in his pocket two hours before, with which he had intended to buy his supper, but that sixpence was not there now, and the boy, truth to tell, was feeling very hungry.

"Never mind," he mused, "it's better as it is, only I can't help wishing I might have just one crust; but if I took it, there would not be enough for breakfast in the morning, and we must begin to save at once," and there was a smile upon James' face as after having knelt and said his short evening prayers—the prayers which old Nurse, who was dead now, had taught him when he was a very little boy,—he lay down upon his bed and slept peacefully, and angels carried those benisons from the cottage

in Cheap Street to the Feet of the FATHER of Mercy, and James Morton's deed of love that night, was surely written in the Book of Life.

It was of this night that we have already spoken at the commencement of this little story, for two hours later Harry came home, and lay on his little bed by James' side in the pale light of the winter's moon.

James was still asleep when the first faint streaks of dawn stole into the little room ; he was aroused by hearing Harry making a great noise.

Now Harry was not generally an early riser, and James wonderéd why he was getting up so early.

"What is it ?" he said drowsily.

"I am going out for the day," was the answer, "mind your own business."

"Out for the day,—where ?"

"Didn't I tell you to mind your own business ?"

"But, Harry, you will lose your day's wages, and we want the money so badly now."

"Be quiet, will you?" and poor James knew it was no use to press the matter any further.

"You will have some breakfast, won't you, Harry ?"

"No, I am going out to breakfast."

He ran down stairs without another word, and James felt very much inclined to cry as a few minutes afterwards he sat down to his solitary meal, and thought that this was the first time that Harry had ever kept anything back from him.

"Hullo, Morton," said a boy, as he walked along the streets to his day's work, "why haven't you gone with the other fellows?"

"Where?" asked James.

"Well, that *is* a good joke, as if you didn't know where Harry and the rest of that larky set had gone."

"No, I don't."

"Well, they are off to Granby to the fair."

Poor James' heart sank within him; Granby fair did not bear a good name. Mr. Morton had never gone to it himself, nor allowed his children to go to it; and now the first use that Harry made of his liberty was to act in direct violation of his father's wishes.

He was very wretched all through the dark November day; and in the evening he could not sit at home alone, he felt so restless and unhappy. He thought he should like to walk towards the Station to meet his brother.

As he passed through Cheap Street, which, by the way, was the very worst street in the whole town, he heard the sound of a Church bell ringing through the clear air.

It was an unwonted sound of a week-day evening, and James wondered for an instant whence it came; then he remembered that there was a new Mission Church just opened in that densely populated neighbourhood.

Something,—surely it was the gentle influence of the HOLY SPIRIT,—impelled him to go in and see what the new Church was like.

The service had begun when he reached it, and James gazed wonderingly at the Cross upon the Altar, and at the Figure of the Crucified LORD which was stretched thereon. He had never seen anything like it before; he knew what it represented, that was all,—all its deep, true meaning, all the power of comfort it carried with it were a mystery to him.

But somehow he liked to stay there; it seemed to bring rest to his poor weary soul,—for he was very weary that night,—he could not tell why, unless it was because Harry had gone away to the fair, and James could not help feeling that he had done wrong. He meant to come away before the sermon, (it

was a Wednesday evening, and there was always a short sermon at the Mission Church on Wednesday evening,) but he stayed on, and listened to such words as he had never heard before.

“My friends,” said the preacher, “I want to say a little to you about the Collect for this week. ‘O LORD, we beseech Thee, absolve Thy people from their offences; that through Thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins, which by our frailty we have committed: grant this, O heavenly FATHER, for JESUS CHRIST’s sake, our blessed LORD and SAVIOUR. Amen.’

“I want to ask you if you know by what means JESUS has appointed that those bands of sin may be loosened, which sometimes threaten to overwhelm us. He has left as a legacy to His Church the great gift of Absolution; He in His Infinite Mercy allows us His Priests to tell you that if you repent and confess your faults, and humble yourselves before Him, He pardons you and makes you clean in the Name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST, through the Merits of His own Most Precious Blood.

“My friends, do not be startled, and think

that what I am saying to you is any new thing ; it is very, very old, it dates back more than eighteen hundred years,—to that day when our own dear LORD, after He had risen from the dead, stood amongst His Apostles, and gave them, His chosen ones, power to forgive sins, and bade them impart that power to their successors, even unto the end of time.

“And we, GOD’s Priests, are successors of the Holy Apostles of old ; come to us therefore with the heavy crushing burden of your sorrows, with the weight of your guilt, whatever it may be, and if from the depths of your heart you repent, if, kneeling in the very presence of GOD, you confess all your misdeeds, by the authority and power committed to us we bid you go in peace, and sin no more.

“If any of you who are listening to me now have any sin upon your conscience, any trouble upon your mind, will you come to me and let me help you for JESUS’ sake ?

“In the Holy Gospel for the week we read that there was a certain ruler who was in trouble because his daughter was dead, and in faith he went to JESUS, and said, ‘Come and lay Thy Hand upon her, and she shall live.’ He the LORD of Love went, and took the dead girl by

the hand, and she arose ; she was brought back from death to life,—and so shall we be brought back from sin to righteousness if we ask Him to stretch forth His pardoning Hand to us, and when we have borne the penance of guilt, we shall arise to the light of Life.

“And, my friends, one word more,—when you have found the peace and the blessing yourselves ; when you have known what it is to lay your burden at the foot of the Cross, and there find the promised help, will you bring those you love, will you bring all your care to God’s own Priests, there to be absolved from their offences, and to find rest unto their souls?”

James Morton listened to those words, and a strange new hope came into the boy’s heart. Was it really all true ? was it possible that such things should be ? Many and many a boyish fault rose up before him then, many and many a haunting memory that had long been laid aside, seemed to come to torment him then ; and then came the assurance that peace and pardon were to be found, if only sought for in the appointed way, through the Merits of the Precious Blood.

“I will come here again,” he mused, as he

left the Church ; "I don't know why it is, but I do feel as though I wanted to be better, to think more of the things of God, to draw nearer to Him."

He needed GOD's own comfort sorely, poor lad, in the days that were to come,—in the lonely, sorrowful life that was to be his portion for many a long year.

As he walked towards the Station he saw John Sandford looking more worried and anxious than he had done on the previous evening.

"How is Minnie?" said James, somewhat awkwardly.

"Thank you, Master James, she is very bad to-day," and a tear that would not be repressed rolled down the haggard cheek.

"Oh, John, can I help you? you look so bad."

"There's enough to make me feel bad, Master James,—the landlord wants five shillings deposit for the week's rent, and if he don't have it to-night, he says we must be out by the morning."

"Come home with me, John,—you shall have the five shillings."

"Oh, Master James, you can't do it."

"Yes, I can,—I ought, it is your due; on Saturday we shall be paid our week's wages,—it is all right, John."

And John, grateful and happy at the prospect of immediate relief from his difficulties, walked home with the boy.

"You need not come up, John, I'll bring it you," and James flew up the staircase as fast as he could.

He came back in a minute or two, his face very white, his limbs trembling.

"John," he said, "I cannot find the money, Harry must have put it away somewhere else, it is not in the box; but he will be home soon, he has only gone to Granby,—and I will take it round to you then."

"Thank you, Master James, God bless you for your good will, and if you can't do it, I shall think of your kindness all the same," and poor John turned away to try and hide from the lad the hopeless look that had come upon his face in those last few minutes.

The last train arrived from Granby, but no Harry appeared; and morning dawned, and still he did not come, and some one told James that he and his companions had got into a terrible scrape,—had been found stealing some

things from one of the stalls,—one or two of them had escaped, and Harry was amongst the number, the others were likely to suffer for their escapade.

“And he’ll suffer too,” thought poor James; “wherever he is, the thought of his sin will come back to him and make him miserable. Oh, if he could but have heard the preacher’s words last night; if he would but be sorry for the wrong he has done.”

And then other thoughts came into the poor fellow’s mind. All hope of being able to take that five shillings to John Sandford was gone now, and Minnie, poor sick Minnie, would be turned out homeless into the streets.

“No, no, it must not be,” said James, “my coat will fetch five shillings,—they must have that.”

He took his great coat,—the only warm thing he had,—to a pawn-shop, and with burning cheeks, said he wanted five shillings for it. It was given him instantly, and hot and breathless he arrived at the poor cottage in Cheap Street.

“Here it is, John,” he said, laying the precious money on the table.

And again John said, “God bless you,” and

Minnie from her corner echoed the words ; and James, muttering something about being very late, sped on his way.

Harry did not come back ; it was said in Barton that he and his friends had enlisted and gone abroad, and there was not a hope that they would be in old England again for many a long year.

And James lived alone in the little dreary room, doing his duty honestly as a Christian lad should, denying himself in everything, even in the common necessities of life, so that he might pay back that money to John Sandford.

Minnie lingered on through the winter and summer months, and when the autumn came she died a peaceful, happy death.

James used to sit with her very often in those last days, telling her of the blessing he had found at the Mission Church, and of the peace that had come to him now. Minnie had long known what that peace was ; and the Sunday before she went away James knelt with her and her father, (he had been confirmed the week previously,) and the sick girl's last Communion was the lonely boy's first.

The years passed on. Amid the crowded

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lanes and courts of Barton a young man is to be seen, when the labours of the day are past, trying to win the sinful and the erring to seek for Pardon through the Precious Blood.

One night a child ran after him and pulled his coat.

"Mr. James, please, mother wants you; there's a soldier come to our place, and he is dying."

James hastened to the wretched house. Lying senseless on a bed, or what was supposed to be a bed,—it was only a heap of rags,—he found the brother he had lost for so long,—whom he had prayed for every day through all those years.

Tenderly and lovingly James nursed him through long weeks of illness, and at last, when the dim eyes opened and fell upon his brother, Harry said,

"I've got five shillings in my pocket, let John have it for his sick girl,"—he had gone back to the sinful past in those first hours of consciousness.

He did not die. The happiest day in all James' life was when he took his erring brother to the Priest of the Mission Church, and heard him say,

"I want to come and confess my sins, I want to be pardoned for JESUS' sake."

And then began the preparation for Confession, the strict heart-searching, the bitter self-abasement, the craving for forgiveness.

Often and often the poor, weak, sinful nature recoiled from the hard task, (for it *is* a hard task to look down into the depths of a soul long blackened by the foul stains of sin,) and seemed inclined to return to the ways which had brought with them nothing but misery; but Harry's Guardian Angel had come back to him with the first dawnings of the penitent, better life, and James' prayers were heard and answered,—the bread cast upon the waters was found, although many long weary days passed away before the blessing came.

The blessing of pardon and of peace,—dear children, do you know or understand half the joy that it brings with it? You can remember perhaps some days in your young lives when you in some way or other gave your parents just cause for anger. It was hard to be in disgrace, was it not? hard to feel that you could not go to them as you usually did, and be sure of meeting loving looks, and of hearing kind words. Then suddenly the knowledge of your

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fault has come to you, and with tears you have gone and asked for forgiveness. Fully and entirely it has been granted,—sunshine has come where dark clouds lowered before.

Dear children, every day of your lives you sin against GOD, and He asks you to be sorry and to confess your faults. He sends you His own appointed Priests to help and guide you, and to promise you Pardon through the Precious Blood. He only asks you to be true and humble, to come to Him as to a loving, tender FATHER, to speak to Him as a penitent child, and trust in His all-forgiving mercy.

Dear children, He died for you ; He came to save you ; only tell Him you are sorry for your many sins, only ask Him to forgive them, and just as of old His sweet Voice spoke the re-assuring words of pardon and of peace, "I will, be thou clean," so now He will speak to you and bid you rest in His Love.

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"I cried out for mercy, and fell on my knees,  
And confessed, while my heart with keen sorrow was  
    wrung ;  
'Twas the labour of minutes, and years of disease  
Fell as fast from my soul as the words from my tongue.

**216 PARDON THROUGH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD.**

**“ All hail then, all hail, to the dear Precious Blood,  
That hath worked these sweet wonders of mercy in  
me ;  
May each day countless numbers throng down to its  
flood,  
And GOD have His glory, and sinners go free.”**

# HARD WAYS MADE SOFT.

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**Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.**

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“ And then how easily Thou turn'st  
The hard ways into soft.”

A GIRL wandered dreamily one November night through the London streets,—dreamily, and yet she had an object in view, she was hastening on an errand in which if successful she knew she should go back to her home and receive something of a welcome; and if she failed—ah, well, Grace Earnshaw knew what she must expect if she failed, and the bare possibility of such a thing caused her to shudder and turn sick with fear, and for an instant she quickened her footsteps, and then she walked on again in the same dreamy desultory manner, and she looked wearily into a shop, and saw

that the clock which hung there pointed only to half-past six, and she sighed and sighed again and murmured, "Another half-hour to wait, and then what is he likely to say to me?"

It was a lovely face which was hidden beneath the old tattered straw bonnet which poor Grace tried in vain to pull more forward, so that she might not be annoyed by the rude glances of the passers by; she did not know how it was, but somehow people did stare at her very rudely, she supposed it must be at her ragged, untidy dress, it could be at nothing else; and Grace smiled a sad sickly smile, as she looked down upon the old dress, which seemed to defy all mending, and would "tear of itself."

The girl had lived in the world for four and twenty long years, and no loving voice had ever spoken to her to tell her that they liked to look upon her,—no tender mother had smoothed the golden hair, and gazed into the depths of the blue grey eyes, and showed Grace that to her mind at least there was not in all the world so fair a face.

Some vague indistinct remembrance she had, of some one who had loved her dearly long long years ago when she was but a tiny child; some far-off memory would seem to come to her in

her dreams of a voice gentle and sweet that had soothed her childish fears; but all this was in the shadowy past, a whisper as it were from another world—far far away from that world in which she had lived, and toiled, and suffered all the years that she could remember.

Grace's first recollection dated back to a seaport town where she had stood upon a pier, and watched the blue waves dancing in the sunlight, and then gazed up to the bright sky above, and wondered whether God and His Angels saw her; whether they who were so good, and loving, knew how poor and miserable and hungry she was.

She could remember, too, the wretched room which had been her home then, when she first missed the mother she had lost, and when she was left to her father's sole care.

She had a brother, a boy some years older than herself, a brave high-spirited fellow, who was always in trouble with his father, who would leave his home for days and come back again, and high words would pass between him and his wretched parent,—then for a while there would be peace, until the next storm lowered; more angry, more fearful than the last. Then once—it was a winter's day—oh, how well Grace

remembered it now ; her father beat Robert mercilessly, and the poor little child stood between them, and a sharp, hard blow fell upon her head, and felled her to the ground.

It was morning when this happened, and the shades of evening were falling into the poor room when Grace opened her eyes, and found that she was all alone.

Late at night her father returned, and she asked him "where Robert was."

He swore a fearful oath and bade her never again mention her brother's name, and she never had,—it almost seemed as though she had forgotten him in the sixteen years that had passed away since that dread winter's day.

But even in the girl's heart there lived the memory of the bright lad, who in his own rough way had tried to be kind to her, and had spent the pence he managed somehow or another to pick up, in buying her cakes and sweets.

Poor Grace, she had almost forgotten how to pray ; it was so long since she had asked anything of GOD, she had never known but one prayer, "Pray GOD bless father and mother, and brother Robert, and make me a good girl, for JESUS CHRIST's sake. Amen." And as the child grew into a girl, and the girl into a woman,

that petition was in her heart still, that prayer fervent in its intense longing and humility was carried by poor Grace's Guardian Angel to the Mercy-seat, and laid down at the Feet of Him Who came to seek and to save the lost ones of His fold.

How her life had been spent it would have been hard for her to tell ; how she had been dragged about by her father from town to town, from city to city, and sat all day in dingy attics whilst he was away,—she knew not where,—how he would come home at night reeling drunk, and go out again next morning to his trade, leaving her to a dry crust of bread and a piece of mouldy cheese for her dinner, to gaze all day upon the chimney-pots of the opposite houses, and upon the crowds passing to and fro in the streets,—this was all Grace could have told of the past, of the years before she and her father took up their abode in the dirty yard leading out of one of the back streets of Holborn, where they had been located for the last six years.

Once some one she had come across on her journeyings had spoken kindly to her, and asked her what her father's trade was.

For an instant she had looked bewildered, and then had answered, " Oh, he's a racer."

It was her questioner's turn to look puzzled, and Grace proceeded to explain her meaning.

"He goes wherever there are races,—and sometimes he gets money, and sometimes he loses it."

The old man who had spoken so kindly to her looked with infinite compassion into the poor little pale face, and muttered,

"God help thee, poor child, for thou wilt sorely need help."

And yet with all Jack Earnshaw's faults, with all the heavy burden of sin that must have lain on the man's conscience, there was one bit of his better nature which still shone forth unchoked by all the tares of his wicked, sinful life,—and that was, his love for his child. Never had he spoken one cross word to her until lately, never since that day when she had received the blow which was meant for Robert had he lifted his hand against her.

His dissolute companions were never allowed to speak to her, his one aim and object seemed to keep her shut away from the world; "I'm a bad fellow I know," he had once said to some one who remonstrated with him upon the lonely life to which he condemned the girl, "but I promised her mother when she was dying that

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she should learn no harm from me, and she shan't if I can help it."

They had come to London for a week one hot summer's day;—six years had passed away, and there they were still.

Jack Earnshaw had managed to get a situation as billiard-marker at some low tavern. His last ventures on the racecourse had been unsuccessful, and he had determined to give up his wandering life, and settle down to business.

To poor Grace the change was a miserable one,—there had been some pleasure sometimes in the old days,—she had loved to travel along the bright fair country roads, and listen to the sweet songs of the birds as they carolled in the leafy trees; she had loved to pick the wild flowers that grew in the hedges, and make them up into a little posy wherewith to brighten the wretched lodging to which her father condemned her.

Now no such joy ever came to her; very long and dreary were the days of poor Grace's lonely life; she managed to get some coarse work from a shop, for which she was but very indifferently paid; and she took very little note of them as it passed on, bringing with it the same dreary round of daily duties.

She rested on Sundays ; she used to stay in bed half the day, and wander out into the crowded streets of an evening, and wonder why it was that she was so wretched, whilst all the rest of the people appeared so bright and joyous.

There came a morning when Jack Earnshaw did not go out as usual.

"Are you ill, father?" said Grace.

"Well, I'm always ill for that matter, but to tell you the truth they've kicked me out of my situation ; I've taken a drop or two too much once or twice lately, and now there's nothing left for us but to starve."

"Father dear," she said, "I can work for both of us until you are better."

He did not answer, he only bent his head upon his hands, and groaned in very bitterness of spirit, and his strength seemed to fail now that day.

It was October then, and all through the dreary weeks that followed she worked and toiled for him, whilst he sat listlessly by the fire, sometimes looking up with a smile, and telling her that she was a good little girl, and that she was like her mother ; and she would smile a sad little smile ; and a faint shadow of something

like happiness would come into the poor weary little heart.

One November day he had been more than usually restless and irritable, and she had spent her last penny, and the rent was owing, and the landlord getting clamorous for his money.

"Father," she said at last, "is there no one in all this great city who can help you?"

Jack Earnshaw was silent for a minute, and at last he said, "Give me my old writing-book, child, and the ink ; I'm going to write a letter."

She did as he bade her, and with considerable effort upon an old torn greasy sheet of paper he indited a somewhat lengthy epistle, which when he had read it over five or six times he put into an envelope and directed to "Mr. Earnshaw, 180, Bridge Street, Westminster."

"Grace," he said, in the old hard tone to which she was so well accustomed, "Grace, I disgraced my family when I was a lad by forging a cheque upon a bank where I was employed as a clerk. I was put into prison for a year, and when I came out again my old father was dead, and my eldest brother refused to see me. I was very sorry then,—I had meant to be steady for the rest of my life ; the hardness drove me to be what you see me now. I might have been

better. I was for a little time after I married your mother ; but it's no use talking of the past, you've been a good girl to me, Grace, you may like to remember that I said this, when they have taken me out of this wretched place to lay me in my grave. It can't be very long, child, before that day comes, no one has ever felt as I feel, and gone back again to life and strength, and so, child, I've swallowed my pride, I've written to Frank (that's my brother) and asked him for your sake to help us a little now ; I've told him what you've been to me, and how you've worked for me, and I've asked him in memory of our own mother (for we both loved her dearly,) to be kind to my girl. I want you to take it to him now, my child ; you must walk there, although it's a long way off, for if we sent it through the post without a stamp upon it, he might refuse to take it in, and we have not a penny in the world to buy a stamp," and the wretched man sighed wearily as he gave the letter into the girl's hand.

"Say you will wait for the answer, child, do not come away without one."

And Grace went on her way, half fearing, half hoping as to what might be the result of her mission.

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Timidly she knocked at the door of a large house in Bridge Street, a huge brass plate upon which testified that it was occupied by Messrs. Hunt and Earnshaw, Solicitors.

A sour looking old woman appeared, and to her Grace told her errand.

The old crone slammed the door in her face, and after about a quarter of an hour's absence, during which Grace stood pale and trembling in that pitiless March wind, she opened a window at the top of the house, and screamed out in her shrill old voice,

"The master's busy now, you are to call for the answer to-morrow night at seven o'clock."

Weary and tired the girl went home to tell her father what she had done.

He had worked himself up into a state of great excitement during her absence, and now when she came back bringing no answer to the letter which it had cost him so much to write, he heaped abusive epithets upon the poor girl's head, and spoke words to her harder and more cruel than she had ever heard fall from his lips before, addressed to her.

"Father, dear father, it is not long to wait, until to-morrow."

The morrow came; the day wore all too

slowly on, and a whole hour before she need have started Jack Earnshaw sent Grace for the answer to the letter.

Thus it was that on that chill March night when we first saw her, she was wandering dreamily on, fearing to arrive at her destination before the appointed time.

The Abbey clock struck the hour of seven as with trembling hand poor Grace knocked at the door of her uncle's house.

The sour visaged old woman appeared, looking a shade more grim even than she had done the day before.

"Come up," she said, "the master will see you now," and something of a pitying glance was in the old crone's cold grey eyes, as she laid her hand upon Grace's shoulder and said, "Don't be afeard, girl, although it's true he's mortal hard."

Then Grace, feeling as she had never felt before in all her life, with all its many troubles, followed the woman up stairs into her uncle's presence.

"Hard ! mortal hard !" Yes, those were the words that rang in her ears, as she looked upon the cold, passionless face, which bore some strange resemblance to her father's, as she lis-

tened to the never-varying tones of the voice which fell like a knell upon her ears.

“Hard! mortal hard!” Yes, she heard it still, mingled with the tones of the old woman’s words of commiseration as she passed out of the door, where the gas-lamp shone upon the great brass plate, “My dear, I’m sorry for you, very sorry, but I told you he was mortal hard.”

There had been dark clouds in the sky when she had entered her uncle’s house, they were black and lurid now, when once more she stood in the chill night air, and the keen easterly blast blew into her face, and seemed to take away for ever that new hope which had arisen in her heart, and to leave in its place a hopeless calm despair which she had never known before. For in that short interview her uncle had asked his conditions, and had had his answer; he had promised to help her if she would swear to leave her father for ever, and never to look upon his face again; he had promised to make a lady of her if she would give up the only being on earth for whom she cared, if she would throw off the poor broken down man who in spite of all his faults, in spite of all the sins of his life had been uniformly kind and gentle to her.

And with a fiery glance in her beautiful eyes,

a glance which haunted the hard old man to the day of his death, the girl had refused his terms, and had left him.

“Hard ! mortal hard !” The words seemed borne to her upon the keen east wind as she pursued her way homewards ; sad, weary, hopeless, with no gleam of brightness as o’er all that dreary expanse of sky, o’er all the dreariness of poor Grace’s life, as dim and indistinct and yet most miserable the future lay stretched out before her.

And as she walked on, dreading to reach her wretched home, dreading to tell her father all that had passed between her and her uncle, there broke upon her ears a sound she had often heard before, and yet had always disregarded ; even the sweet glad music of Church bells.

Something—she did not know what then, she did know in after days, that it was the HOLY SPIRIT given her in her Baptism which was working within her, impelling her to take her trouble where alone she could find rest and comfort, made her stand wavering for an instant, looking up at the tall, graceful steeple, listening to the music of the bells, which chimed in so strangely with those words which the old woman had spoken, “Hard ! mortal hard !”

Yes, it was all hard,—hardest of all was her life, that life which must soon be so lonely, bereft even of that poor love which had imparted something of sweetness into it.

As she stood doubtfully at the door of the Church, the organ broke out into a glad solemn melody; and a hand was laid upon the girl's arm, and a voice, the very sweetest that had ever fallen upon poor Grace's ear, said in softest, gentlest accents, "My child, you seem troubled,—come in here with me, it will do you good;" and then Grace followed the Sister of Mercy into the Church, and for the first time in her life the girl knelt upon her knees, because she saw others doing it.

There were words spoken in a strange tone by the Priest, and echoed by the people; there was a prayer said,—one which some time in her life, (oh, how many years ago it must have been,) Grace had heard before, but which came back to her like a long-forgotten strain,—“Our FATHER, Which art in Heaven.” There was sweet, solemn music, in which all joined, but in which poor Grace could take no part. There was a poor woman at her side offered her a hymn-book, and she managed to stumble over the hymn which the little choristers were singing so

sweetly. She did not understand much of it; reading was a task of some difficulty to her, but two lines of the verses, which seemed so strange and unintelligible to her, she managed to make out, and she wondered what they could possibly mean,—wondered how she could learn to do what *they* said could be done,

“And then how easily Thou turn’st,  
The hard ways into soft.”

The music ceased, and one of the Priests stood upon the Altar steps, and seemed to answer the question poor Grace would fain have asked.

“My dear people,” he said, “most of you who have come here to Church to-night are poor, and wretched, and miserable; your daily lives are for the most part made up of sorrow and of toil; you have heavy burdens to bear, and you murmur at the hardness God has sent into your lives; and I would ask you to listen to me for a very few minutes whilst I show you how these hard ways can be made soft.

“This is the last evening of the Christian Year on which I shall speak to you; the day after to-morrow will be Advent Sunday, and in watching, and fasting, and prayer we shall be

preparing to meet our own dear LORD at the glad Christmas Feast.

“ My friends, when you heard the Gospel for last Sunday you heard these words, ‘ Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost ;’ and I want you this evening to gather up the teaching of the year that is fast going from us. I want you to go back to last Christmas and think of the Holy Child lying all cold and chill in the manger ; I want you to think of HİM in the lone wilderness and in the Garden, and on the cruel Cross ; I want you to try and remember all that He bore for your sakes during that Sacred Life of three and thirty years,—that Life which He lived that He might take the hardness out of our lives, that He might sanctify all human sorrow and all human suffering for evermore.

“ This is the lesson of the Christian Year ; this is the lesson that we learn when we gather up the fragments of the Church’s teaching, and trace the Sacred course that was trodden for us men and for our salvation.

“ Do not say that your lives are hard, for the Life of JESUS was hard, so that yours might be softened thereby ; do not say that GOD’s ways are hard, for the thought of JESUS’ Sufferings turns ‘ the hard ways into soft.’

“Remember that He died so that you might be made perfect with Him through suffering. And yet one word more. Would you lighten the seeming hardness of your lives? would you throw some brightness into the gloom which is around you? Do as He did all through His Life; let your time and thoughts be given to others, and through others to Him. Look around you and see whether there are none whom you can help, none whose lot you can cheer; go and tell some, worse off than yourselves,—some who are not here to-night,—to hear of the mercy and love of the Crucified,—what I have told you; tell them that there is no hardness in their lives which cannot be made soft, no cloud so dark that the sun of JESUS’ Love cannot pierce through it.”

The preacher’s voice ceased; the clock struck the quarter to nine. Grace had listened greedily to every word; some she could not understand, but somehow they seemed to speak to her of rest and hope, of some ray of brightness amid all that had seemed so “mortal hard” before. One glance she took at that outstretched Figure upon the Cross,—upon the Head bowed in agony, upon the Sacred, pitying Face, which seemed to speak of infinite compassion; then

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very quietly she left the Church, but ere she did so there rose from her heart that one simple prayer of her life for her father and Robert and herself.

Then once more she stood in the cold night air, but somehow in that short half-hour warmth and light had come into the girl's soul. She walked quickly homewards; she had already been out much too long, and she still had to call at "the shop" to be paid for some work she had done the day before.

She received the few pence with which to buy something for her father's supper and breakfast the next morning, and she got the promise of more work; and as she continued her way towards the dirty yard which she had learned to hate, something of softness had come into poor Grace's hard life.

Then as she ran up the staircase the old dread was upon her, the fear of what her father would say when he heard how unsuccessful had been her errand. Timidly she opened the door, and stood at his side.

"Father, I have been a long time, I went into a Church, and it was so beautiful I did not know it was so late."

He turned his face upon her, and there was

a strange expression upon it, the gentlest she had ever seen there, as he answered,

"I am glad you went to Church, Gracie, mother always went there in the old days."

"And father,"—she was longing yet she dreaded to tell him that she had come back as poor as she went, except for those few pence which she had received in payment for her work,—“and father, I saw uncle, and—and—”

Still the same gentle expression in those eyes which wandered restlessly upon the girl's face.

"Never mind, child, never mind what he said, I can see it was no good, and I'd rather not hear it now, I'd rather wait until I feel better, for I'm very tired to-night, and I think I had better go to bed."

She helped him to undress, and he tried to eat some of the supper she had brought him in, but he said he had better leave it until the morning, and he lay back wearily and closed his eyes, and Grace with the shadow of a nameless fear upon her, sat far on into the night and watched him.

Then as morning dawned, he spoke.

"Grace, what did you hear about in the Church?"

She told him a few words,—told him what

she had understood about the Love of JESUS, and described to him that wondrous Figure of the Crucifixion.

There was a smile upon the weary face then, —a look that had in it something of hope.

“Yes, yes, I remember, He forgave the thief on the Cross; oh, Grace, ask Him to forgive me all the sins of my life.”

A deadly pallor overspread the wasted features, and then a ray of sunlight shone into the room and lit up Jack Earnshaw's dead face.

GOD have mercy upon his soul for JESUS' sake.

They buried him as a pauper in a crowded suburban cemetery, and there was but one mourner at his grave, the daughter who would have given up her life for him.

Sorrowing she turned away and went back to her lonely home, to work still, but only for herself now. The thought was agony, the loneliness and dreariness of the life almost insupportable. Then Grace remembered the words she had heard in Church, and she thought she must go there again to hear of the love and the sufferings of JESUS.

So she went on that night of the funeral, and

her to choose where their London home should be, and she asked that it might be somewhere near that Church where she had first learned how to turn hard ways into soft.

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